

February 9, 1998

De Niro caged in former Bond film
LOS ANGELES (AP) — The...
Twins celebrate birthday in New York
BRIGHTON (AP) — The...
Nagano hangs on for the game
Chinese doctor swallowed...
Spaniard may have taken...
Nagano hangs on for the game

Iraqi Kurdish leaders visit Iran
TEHRAN (AP) — Several Iraqi Kurdish leaders, including Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), are in Iran to discuss the situation in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, a newspaper reported Monday. The English-language daily Telran Times said the officials arrived Sunday and that they would also take part in ceremonies marking the 19th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on Wednesday. Mr. Talabani and other Kurdish officials are to hold talks with Iranian officials on the situation in northern Iraq, it said. The paper identified another visiting Kurdish official as Fazel Mirani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani. The KDP and PUK have been in conflict over power-sharing in northern Iraq, which they have controlled since the 1991 Gulf war in defiance of Baghdad and under U.S. and allied protection.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية - الراي

Al Azhar calls on Muslims to defend Iraq
CAIRO (AP) — Cairo-based Al Azhar, the highest authority in Sunni Islam, called for Muslims to risk their lives to defend the Iraqi people if the United States attacks them. "We are opposed to any aggression against the Muslim Iraqi people... and must rally to their side and lay down our lives and our fortunes to defend them," Al Azhar leader Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi said in remarks published Monday by the Egyptian weekly Al Ushua. "The United States is carrying out a policy that is tough with one side and gentle with the other. It is unfair to Iraq but aligns itself with Israel. But it is necessary to adopt a single criterion, that of justice, whereby all countries are treated on an equal footing," the sheikh said. "Washington takes it upon itself to decide unilaterally on an attack against Iraq with no mandate from the United Nations. Any unjust aggression goes against international legislation and monotheistic religions," he added.

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King, Queen back home

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor returned home Monday concluding a several day visit to the United Kingdom. While in London, King Hussein held talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the latest developments in the Middle East region. Upon arrival at the airport, Their Majesties were received by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Royal family members and senior civil and military officials.

Shevardnadze survives assassination attempt

TBILISI (AP) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze survived an assassination attempt in the centre of the capital Tbilisi, the Iprinda news agency reported. The former Soviet foreign minister survived after his motorcade came under attack from grenade-launchers, the agency said. The president's bodyguards quickly evacuated him from the scene. A journalist said a gunfire exchange went on for several minutes at the location of the attack.

Qatari emir visits Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH (AP) — Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for talks with King Fahd on the Iraq crisis. Qatar's ambassador to the kingdom, Ali Al Mahmoud, told AFP the two leaders would discuss the latest moves in the crisis over U.N. inspections of Iraq's arms arsenals.

Fatchett to visit Cairo Thursday

CAIRO (AP) — Britain's Junior Foreign Minister Derek Fatchett is due here Thursday for meetings on ways to restart the Israeli-Arab peace process, an Egyptian foreign ministry official said Monday. "During his one-day visit, Mr. Fatchett will study with (Egyptian) Foreign Minister Amr Musa the latest developments in the peace process and Cairo's efforts to break deadlocks in it," said Fathi Al Shazli, deputy minister for European affairs.

GCC ministers to hold talks on Iraq this week

MUSCAT (R) — The foreign ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will hold an extraordinary meeting this week to discuss the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations, the official Oman news agency said on Monday. The agency said it had learned the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman were due to meet in Kuwait on Wednesday.

Likud Party nominates rival candidate for Israeli president

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party nominated Shaul Amor Monday to stand against incumbent Ezer Weizman in elections next month for the post of Israeli president. Likud members of parliament selected their fellow deputy to run against Mr. Weizman in the March 4 parliamentary vote by secret ballot, party officials said. Mr. Amor, 47, an immigrant from Morocco who serves as mayor of a small town in northern Israel, is generally given little chance of defeating the popular Weizman.

Jordan will not support military action against Iraq — Monarch

'I have found myself more than once predicting what is going to happen and warning about it, but when it does occur, we bear the consequences'

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday said that Jordan does not support a military strike on Iraq because it will affect the Iraqi people, a dilemma other Arab leaders face. "I don't think that I am in a position to support action that might affect the people of Iraq and I think that it is a dilemma that everybody faces. The people have suffered enough and continue to suffer. I hope that it will never happen. But at the same time, I can realise the dynamics of the situation and therefore I am suggesting everything to be done to avoid it and that includes a suggestion to the Iraqi leadership to come forth with regard to all agreements and implement them."

The King also warned that "the situation is critical and requires all possible efforts to prevent a new military confrontation," stressing "that Iraq has to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions."

Speaking after a meeting with British Prime Minister



His Majesty King Hussein and British Prime Minister Tony Blair leave Downing Street after a meeting Monday (Reuters photo)

(Continued on page 7)

Annan cancels Middle East tour, denies plans for trip to Baghdad

Iraq launches diplomatic offensive on Arab front amidst British claims Iraq may have large quantities of Agent 15

U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan on Monday cancelled at the last minute a planned 10-day Middle East tour and said he had "no plans at present" to travel to Baghdad. Mr. Annan explained to journalists as he entered the U.N. building that his presence was required in New York during the continuing showdown with Iraq over weapons inspections. Mr. Annan had been scheduled to depart Tuesday on visits to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian self-rule Gaza Strip, returning to New York on Feb. 21. He was to have made a stopover in Rome on the way to Cairo. Arab diplomatic sources in Jordan said earlier Monday that Mr. Annan had decided to remain in New York. The U.N. chief also denied that he planned to travel to Baghdad, following an announcement by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Rome that he would do so.

Russia has been pressing Mr. Annan to go to Baghdad to negotiate an end to the U.N.-Iraq crisis by flying to the Iraqi capital. But Mr. Annan said Monday: "I have no plans at the moment to go to Baghdad."

Mr. Annan noted that he was in touch with all the parties concerned, with governments which had sent envoys to Iraq, and in some cases with the envoys directly, as well as with the Iraqi authorities.

"I think the discussions and the search for a diplomatic solution has reached a critical stage and my presence is needed here," he said.

"So I'm going to stay here and work with all concerned in search for a diplomatic

Turkey denies fresh incursion into Iraq

ANKARA (AP) — Turkey Monday denied allegations that thousands of its troops had entered neighbouring northern Iraq amid the latest Iraqi crisis. "There is no such thing," foreign ministry spokesman Necati Utkan told reporters here when asked if there had been a Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq. Quoting unnamed sources, two Turkish private television stations reported Sunday and Monday that nearly 7,000 Turkish troops had entered northern Iraq to take measures against a possible

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. denies plans for Kurdish state in Iraq

ANKARA (AP) — The United States Monday denied claims by Turkey's nationalist Deputy Premier Bulent Ecevit that Washington wanted to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq following a possible attack against Baghdad. "The United States has supported the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity and this support is continuing," a private Turkish television station quoted U.S. Ambassador in Ankara Mark Parris as saying. "The United States is not backing any separatist movement in Iraq, and this includes a Kurdish state," Mr. Parris told the NTV station. Mr. Ecevit charged Sunday that the ongoing U.S. showdown with Iraq was designed to control world oil prices and set up a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

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Crown Prince, Cousseran discuss means to resolve Iraqi crisis

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Monday met with French foreign ministry official, Jean-Claude Cousseran, and discussed with him efforts to resolve the Iraq-U.N. crisis through diplomatic means. The Crown Prince stressed the need to give the French initiative a chance to overcome the tension following U.S. threats to launch a military strike against Iraq as a result of Baghdad's refusal to grant U.N. inspectors free access to enter presidential palaces. During the meeting, Prince Hassan reiterated the Kingdom's position that the crisis should be resolved peacefully and the need to avoid military action "which neither Iraq nor the region can absorb."

The Crown Prince also stressed the necessity for Iraq to comply with U.N. resolutions. Mr. Cousseran, who arrived here from Beirut, was among a

Tarawneh warns against U.S. rejection of Russian initiative

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh warned Monday that U.S. rejection of the Russian peace initiative to end the Iraqi crisis peacefully will make the military option inevitable. Dr. Tarawneh told Al Ra'i Arabic daily that Jordan hopes the French efforts will succeed in reaching a peaceful breakthrough to the deadlock. He described the situation that prevails in the region as "ambiguous."

"It is not known how far the military strike will go. The danger of dividing Iraq is a threat to all regional countries," said the minister. "We in Jordan are against this because we are for the unity of Iraqi territories." Dr. Tarawneh confirmed that Saudi Arabia has agreed to supply Jordan with oil in case the Iraqi supplies are cut off as a result of a military strike.

four-man team, led by the secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, Bertrand Dufourcq, visiting Baghdad last week. A French diplomat told the Jordan Times on Sunday that Mr. Dufourcq will submit a report to French President Jacques Chirac following his return to Paris. France, which opposes military action against Iraq, was expected to submit to the U.N.

Security Council a plan to end the crisis between Iraq and the United States. During their visit to Baghdad, the French team met with senior Iraqi officials including President Saddam Hussein. They also met with the Russian presidential envoy to Iraq, Viktor Posuvalyuk, who is in Baghdad still in an attempt to achieve a breakthrough in the crisis.

'Rawabdeh resigned NCP'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Abdul Rauf Rawabdeh, the second man in the National Constitutional Party (NCP) has recently resigned, party sources told the Jordan Times. Mr. Rawabdeh, who was the party's deputy secretary general, ran on the party ticket for the November elections and won one of 16 seats in the current Parliament. The NCP has been plagued by divisions and resignations since it was formed by the

merger of 10 smaller parties, including Mr. Rawabdeh's Yaqazah (Awakening) Party. The party fielded 11 of its leaders for the November elections, but only two made it to the 80-member Lower House. Mr. Rawabdeh and the party's secretary general, Abdul Hadi Majali. Touted by the tabloid media as the "party of the regime," the NCP was one of the main reasons leading to the Islamist opposition boycott of the elec-

tions for fear that it might lose for the NCP. Mr. Rawabdeh, a former deputy prime minister, was not the first to resign from the one-year-old NCP. Several party members resigned in the past year, including former House Speaker Aqlif Al Fayer. Most of those who resigned were protesting what they described as the "decision-making mechanism" in the party.

EU chief tells Israel, PNA to stop stalling implementation of accords

GAZA CITY (AP) — EU Commission President Jacques Santer met with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Monday and called on Israeli and Palestinian leaders alike to stop evading full implementation of their peace agreements. "We are disappointed and concerned by the lack of progress in the peace process and that is why I think I can ask with great insistence for all parties to honour their commitments," Mr. Santer told reporters after his talks with Mr. Arafat. "We demand that Israel's security be guaranteed, and at the same time believe that the best guarantee for Israel's security is to promote the

economic development of Palestine," he said as Mr. Arafat looked on. Mr. Santer met Sunday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as part of a tour of the region to boost the European Union (EU) role in the Mideast peace process. Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have been stalled for nearly a year, with Israel refusing to carry out promised troop withdrawals from more occupied land and Islamists pursuing violent attacks against the Jewish state. Mr. Netanyahu has made pursuit of the peace process conditional on toughened Palestinian action against the

(Continued on page 7)

NATO chief faces unwelcome Bosnia-Iraq linkage by U.S.

By Douglas Hamilton
Reuters

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana travels to Washington this week facing an unexpected threat of linkage between U.S. support for NATO peacekeeping in Bosnia and European backing for U.S. policy on Iraq. It comes from influential U.S. senators, who raised eyebrows at a weekend conference in Munich by forcefully tying their support for the Bosnia mission to Europe's readiness to endorse force in the standoff with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The blunt display of arm-twisting was not joined by U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen, who also attended the conference on

international security. But it capped a week of uphill, public and at times frustrating U.S. efforts to elicit allied, particularly Arab, support for the use of force in Iraq — an option with nothing like the support Washington enjoyed in the 1990 Gulf crisis. According to one German commentator, the Americans had come to the annual Munich gathering with "a clear will to talk more plainly to their European allies than ever before." If American troops were needed in Bosnia to help the allies uphold Western values, face a common challenge, and promote a common goal, then why was the United States standing alone on Iraq? German Chancellor Hel-

(Continued on page 7)

Israel asking employers to hire more Palestinians instead of foreign workers

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli authorities have taken a series of measures to convince employers to replace foreign labourers with Palestinians from the occupied territories, officials said on Monday.

In the latest such step, the army announced that an additional 2,000 Palestinians, mostly from the Gaza Strip, would be authorised to remain overnight in Israel, notably to permit them to work on around-the-clock construction projects.

Three thousand Palestinians were given a similar authorisation late last year.

"Until now the Palestinians were obliged to leave their workplace and return home at the end of each day," said Shlomo Dror, spokesman for the military coordinator of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.

Under the new system,

selected Palestinian workers will be able to work overtime or on night shifts, something impossible for the vast majority of the 60,000 Palestinian labourers currently permitted to hold jobs in Israel.

"Our aim is to make Palestinians more attractive to employers than immigrant foreign workers," Mr. Dror told AFP.

To benefit from the eased restrictions on Palestinian workers, employers must provide adequate housing and name a foreman to ensure the Arabs remain at the worksite.

Palestinians must be at least 28 years old, married and have already worked in Israel for at least three years to obtain permission to remain in the country during the work week.

The defence ministry has also promised employers to provide special security

clearances for 30,000 Palestinians who will be allowed to reach their jobs even during security closures of the occupied territories.

Previously following major attacks in Israel the army sealed the territories, barring all workers from entering Israel. The closures have lasted anywhere from days until months, causing serious economic hardships for the Palestinians and disrupting work in many Israeli enterprises.

"Employers complain that the closures paralyse their activities and require them to hire foreign immigrant workers," Mr. Dror said.

Since the early 1990s, the number of Palestinians authorised to work in Israel has fallen from more than 100,000 while the number of foreign workers has soared to 100,000, with another 200,000 in the country illegally — notably from

Romania, Asia and Africa.

While the foreign workers are generally paid \$30 to \$50 less per month than Palestinians, the presence of large numbers of non-Jewish immigrants has created tensions and social problems in the country's main cities.

"Our new policy of reducing as much as possible the handicaps for Palestinian workers is aimed in large part at reducing the number of foreign workers," Mr. Dror said.

He said Israeli authorities were also concerned about falling living standards in the Palestinian areas over the past four years.

The economic problems undermine support for the peace process while strengthening the influence of extremists, notably Islamists who gain popular support by offering social services to poor families.



ISRAELI TROOPS FIRE ON DEMONSTRATORS: An Israeli soldier shoots at Palestinian demonstrators in Ramallah. The United States said on Monday that chances were ebbing away for a diplomatic solution to the crisis over Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction (Reuters photo)

Palestinian security chief admits human rights abuses

DUBAI (AFP) — A Palestinian security chief has admitted to violations of human rights in the autonomous Palestinian areas but downplayed them as individual acts, in an interview published here Monday.

Nasser Youssef, director of Palestinian General Security, was reacting to reports that several Palestinian detainees had died under torture in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I cannot deny such violations by some individuals in our security institutions. But they are violations by individuals, not institutions," Mr.

Youssef told the United Arab Emirates daily Al Bayan.

"They are mistakes because we are going through a new experience in our security and a transitional period from a revolution to a state, which will have its price and needs time and effort," he said.

"These individuals were fedayeen [guerrillas] or political activists, and we are doing our best to put an end to such mistakes by training them and teaching them to respect human rights."

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has often come under fire from local

and international organisations over human rights abuses. Several Palestinian prisoners have been reported to have died under torture.

"The Palestinian leadership realises that the world is watching our performance to help us achieve our goals," Mr. Youssef said.

"There is no doubt that the past years have witnessed tragic incidents in this connection. So we need more time to train our security elements and make them learn how to respect human rights and deal in a civilised manner."

Israel asks Swiss for gas masks

BERN (AFP) — Israel has asked Switzerland to supply it with gas masks, a Swiss federal defence department spokesman said here Monday.

The equipment request was made on Thursday by the Israeli embassy's military attaché, Hans Ruedi Moser said.

The Israeli embassy in Bern refused to comment. "We have to look now if we have enough material and how much we can sell to Israel," Mr. Moser said.

adding that Israel had not specified how many masks it wanted.

The defence department kept a "certain stock" of gas masks but would have to check whether private manufacturers could furnish supplies.

The department would give an answer on Thursday, Mr. Moser said.

Israeli television reported Friday that Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States would shortly ship some 200,000 gas masks to Israel for use in case of an Iraqi chemical or biological attack.

Most of the imported masks would be used for an estimated 300,000 foreign workers in the country, including some 100,000 Palestinians living in parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip still under Israeli control, the television said.

Israel fears that Iraq could respond to a U.S. strike by firing missiles at the Jewish state.

Israel police recently arrested a man for stealing gas masks for resale to foreign workers.

Voices in the Wilderness members to depart for Iraq with medical supplies

AMMAN (J.T.) — As the U.S. threatens military strikes against Iraq, Voices in the Wilderness announced that its 11th delegation, a joint U.S./U.K. delegation, will depart for Baghdad on Thursday with over \$110,000 worth of medicine and medical supplies for children's hospitals, according to a Voices in the Wilderness press release Monday.

While proclaiming that no Middle East country will be allowed to develop

weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. and the U.K. threaten to use their vast arsenal of such weapons against a country already suffering the consequences of brutal economic sanctions and previous bombardments, the announcement said.

Voices in the Wilderness member Art Laffin, of Washington, D.C., said "as tensions escalate, we call for diplomatic solutions and condemn any further military strikes against the people of Iraq. We urge the leaders of all parties

involved in the current crisis to work toward immediate lifting of the economic sanctions as the only way to solve the most pressing crisis in Iraq, the suffering of the Iraqi people."

"The real weapons of mass destruction in Iraq are the economic sanctions which have already killed hundreds of thousands," said Mary Donnelly, of Portland, Maine, who with her husband, Mike, is part of the present delegation.

Delegation members risk 12 years in prison and \$1

million in fines for carrying medicines to Iraq without authorisation, according to a letter issued by the United States Treasury Department.

Delegation members are: Kathy Kelly, Chicago; Chuck Quilty, Rock Island, Illinois; Richard McDowell, Akron, Ohio; Art Laffin, Washington, D.C.; Mike and Mary Donnelly, Portland, Maine; Martin Thomas, Essex, U.K.; and Mil Rai and Felicity Arbuthnot, London, the statement concluded.

Lebanese PM arrives in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri arrived here Monday for a two-day visit aimed at developing bilateral economic relations.

Mr. Hariri, accompanied by Finance Minister Fuad Sanjour, was greeted at

the airport by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Bernama news agency reported.

This is Mr. Hariri's second visit in three years.

Both Mr. Hariri and Mr. Mahathir will later hold

talks and witness the signing of several bilateral agreements, mainly regarding investment protection.

Trade between the two countries remained modest — \$22 million in 1996 — with Malaysia importing only \$300,000 worth of Lebanese goods.

UAE magazine warns Arabs off from U.S.

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A United Arab Emirates (UAE) magazine on Monday warned Arab countries off from the United States, saying their turn would come once Washington dismantles Iraq's military machine.

Under the headline, "Whose turn after Iraq?" the weekly Al Shuruf said U.S. allegations that Iraq remained a threat to its neighbours were a lie.

"We say this because by neighbours they mean one party: Israel," the magazine said in a commentary on U.S. threats to attack Iraq if it continues to

refuse access for U.N. arms inspectors to enter presidential sites.

"When America carries out what it wants in Iraq, nothing will prevent it from moving to another [Arab] party that raises its voice against Israel, the regional order and U.S. interests, which are numerous," it said.

The mass-circulation weekly said Washington would seek new excuses to attack Iraq in future if it could not launch a strike in the current crisis because of what it called opposition from Arab states and other

countries.

"Settling scores will not be confined to Iraq but to all those who say no to the U.S.," it said.

"The institution of Arab summits should be reactivated and Arabs should take advantage of the Russian, Chinese and, to a lesser extent, French opposition" to a U.S. attack on Iraq, it said.

"Otherwise, their turn will come, collectively or separately, and Israel will remain... the dominant power and the only party to possess and use weapons of mass destruction."

Turkey downsizing Baghdad embassy

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Monday it was reducing the personnel at its embassy in Baghdad amid the ongoing crisis over U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq.

"It will be a normal thing

to reduce the personnel and continue operations with a skeleton crew only," foreign ministry spokesman Necati Utkan said.

"It will also be normal to let the women and children leave, but the chief of the

mission is authorised to make the decision according to the situation," Mr. Utkan said, adding that some may already have left.

Turkey's ambassador in Baghdad, Selim Karasmanoglu, told Turkish state

television on Sunday night that the embassy would continue operating, and denied reports of plans for a full evacuation.

Mr. Karasmanoglu said he would remain in the Iraqi capital.

Six Sudanese soldiers killed in attack — opposition

CAIRO (AFP) — The armed Sudanese opposition on Monday said 10 soldiers were killed during a weekend attack in the southeast near the Ethiopian border.

"Forces of the Sudanese Alliance (FAS) continued their advance south of Gallabat and were able Sunday to capture the town of Al Farza after a battle with the enemy that left 10 dead in their ranks," the executive office of the FAS said in a

statement received by AFP.

The opposition army, which is allied with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against the Khartoum regime, had already claimed to have killed 91 government soldiers on Saturday.

They said they captured the government military garrison on the island of Doud, also south of Gallabat, as well as a large amount of arms and munitions.

The FAS communiqué on

Monday said the opposition forces had taken two government soldiers prisoner and additional arms "including missile launchers, nine cannon of various calibres, four mortars, 11 machine-guns and light arms and munitions."

The opposition, which has been fighting to overthrow Khartoum's Islamist regime since 1989, has

mounted several attacks since the start of the year against government positions in the south.

The SPLA, the main component of the umbrella National Democratic Alliance, attacked government positions in the southern Bahr Al Ghazal region about two weeks ago.

Fighting is also under way along the border between Sudan and Eritrea.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:10Cartoon — Cro
16:30French Cartoon Films
18:00Small Talk
18:30Border Town
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Documentary
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — A Whole New Ball Game
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Encounter
21:10Drama — Burned Bridge
22:00News in English
22:30Feature Film — "The Deliverance of the Elaine"
23:59Metro Cafe

PRAYER TIMES

05:01Fajr
06:19(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:50Dhuhr
14:53Asr
17:20Maghreb
18:39Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel.
661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel.
654932.
Armenian International Church
Tel. 865897
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Amman04/09
Aqaba09/19
Deserts04/08
Jordan Valley07/16
Cold weather conditions will prevail with skies cloudy to partly cloudy. Intermittent thunder showers are expected as thin layers of snow will cover mountainous areas of very high altitudes. Winds will be northeasterly to easterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of showers, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas choppy.
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 11, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 69 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Abu Shikhab 752405
Dr. Mukhlis Halaseh 5519220
Dr. Rudi Sukkar 856457
Dr. Fadl Al Khatib 863456
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Naroukh pharmacy 623672
IRBID:
Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja 252970
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Issa Al Omari 918932
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Dept 566111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 0853200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 0853200

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Dept 566111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 566727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 5666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100
FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT
ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
07:25Damascus (RJ)
10:00Abu Dhabi, Aqaba (RJ)
10:05Muscat, Dubai (RJ)

DEPARTURES

10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
17:30Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:30London, Frankfurt (RJ)
Other Flights
14:35Istanbul (TK)
14:40Munich (LH)
16:30Rome (AZ)
18:30Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:00Tel Aviv (LY)
20:10Beirut (ME)
20:40Cairo (MS)
22:20London (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)
23:35Larnaca (CY)
Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:45Aqaba (RW)
09:05Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20Aqaba (RW)
22:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20Beirut (RJ)
08:25Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

ARRIVALS

11:15Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:00Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
19:30Jeddah (RJ)
20:20Larnaca (RJ)
20:40Damascus (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
Other Flights
02:25Amsterdam (KL)
03:00Athens (OA)
15:40Munich (YP)
15:45Istanbul (TK)
17:30Rome (AZ)
19:30Dubai (EK)
19:30Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
Royal Wings (RW) Flights
06:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15Aqaba (RW)
09:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50Aqaba (RW)



HRH Princess Basma on Monday talks with a student after the awards ceremony for the 1997 Hashemite Competition for Health and Solidarity (Petra photo)

Princess Basma distributes awards to charity competition winners

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma distributed awards Monday to the 52 students who won the 1997 Hashemite Competition for Health and Solidarity (HCHS) and voiced appreciation of the various organisations and schools that contributed to the success of the competition's charity campaign.

The HCHS was created three years ago as a programme of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) to raise public and student awareness on the need for social solidarity and helping the disabled.

A total of 600,000 people took part in the competition this year, reflecting the Jordanian people's interest in extending a helping hand to the disabled, the Princess said at the awards ceremony, which was held at the Islamic Cultural Centre within the King Abdullah Mosque complex.

Over the past three years, the HCHS has succeeded in securing contributions for 277 persons and children suffering from cerebral palsy. It has also financed the opening of 30 classrooms at the Ministry of Education's schools for the benefit of the learning disabled, benefiting 100 students around the country, the Princess noted.

The competition is normally conducted through special questionnaires distributed to students for a 250 file fee, each providing some information about the care for the disabled. The students are then asked to answer specific questions about matters related to helping the disabled.

A QAF official told the Jordan Times that banks and other organisations contribute to the programme in the form of electrical and other appliances, including television sets and videos, as well as cash, to be distributed to the winners.

At the ceremony, Princess Basma distributed the programme's shields to 170 people in recognition of their contributions and support for QAF programmes.

She also expressed her gratitude to the higher committee, which groups prominent personalities representing the private and public sectors and is chaired by businessman Thebet Taher.

Princess Basma later inspected various equipment displayed at a special exhibition for the benefit of the blind and was briefed on training programmes for the blind enabling them to use special Braille-equipped computers.

Palestinian health minister arrives for discussions on bilateral cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Palestinian Health Minister Riyad Zannoun arrived in Amman on Monday at the head of an official delegation for talks on Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in health-related fields.

Dr. Zannoun, who will hold talks with his Jordanian counterpart Ashraf Kurdi during his three-day visit, said he hopes that the existing level of cooperation will be expanded,

especially concerning the transfer of Palestinian patients suffering from complicated cases to Jordanian hospitals.

He said the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) hopes that Jordan will agree to provide training to Palestinian personnel and will arrange for the export of Jordanian drugs in cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry.

The PNA hopes that the two sides will translate their health cooperation protocol into practical steps serving both peoples, he added.

Under the July 1996 health cooperation protocol, the two sides will cooperate in providing primary health care services dealing with areas such as sanitation, food safety, endemic and communicable diseases, family and commu-

nity medicine, and nursing, and exchange information about contagious diseases should an outbreak occur.

Also under the protocol, Jordan will offer medical treatment to Palestinians at Ministry of Health centres and hospitals and will grant free medical treatment to 10 Palestinian patients a year if they are formally referred by the PNA.

The protocol provides medium- and long-term training courses for medical staff, with Jordan agreeing to train up to 16 health officials annually.

Jordan will also test vaccines for the PNA at Ministry of Health laboratories.

During Dr. Zannoun's visit, he will tour hospitals, health institutions and other facilities.

China urges diplomacy in Iraq-U.N. crisis — ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — The ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Jordan, Liu Baolai, on Monday stated that China supports a diplomatic solution to the U.N.-Iraqi crisis and voiced his country's concern over the tense situation over weapons inspections.

In an interview with the Jordan New Agency, Petra, Mr. Baolai said China is currently exerting efforts with all concerned parties to find a solution to the crisis obviating the need for military force.

"China calls on all concerned parties to exercise self-restraint in order to stop aggravating the situation," said Mr. Baolai.

"We call upon Iraq to implement all the U.N. Security Council resolutions in a comprehensive and effective manner and ask others to respect Iraq's sovereignty and find a way to help end the suffering of the Iraqi people," he added.

"The suffering of the Iraqis should be put to an end and the inspection files should be closed as soon as possible," said the Chinese ambassador.

Majali urges ministry to speed up work on water network replacement

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Monday urged the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to speed up work on the replacement of old and worn out water networks in Amman and other areas of Jordan.

Addressing a meeting at the ministry, Dr. Majali said water projects are of strategic importance and have assumed a priority in

view of the Kingdom's need of water resources.

He noted that the Kingdom has been promised foreign capital for investments in these projects.

Work on replacing old water networks started in 1995 with the goal of saving the at least 35 per cent of total water supplies that had been leaking out. In December 1997, the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ)

announced that Germany was financing part of the project in Amman at the cost of about \$27.3 million.

Dr. Majali said the recent rains promise a good agricultural season and adequate water storage behind dams and in underground aquifers.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin reviewed the ministry's plans and the

progress made in replacing the water network.

He said the ministry was closely cooperating with all the organisations financing the projects and pursuing a fixed plan.

Referring to the recent rains, Dr. Haddadin said the reservoirs behind the country's dams are now up to 90 per cent of total capacity.

Arab human rights group blasts government's 1997 record

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) has slammed the government's human rights record and faulted the elections and press and publications laws as a setback for Jordan's democracy and public freedoms.

In its annual report, published on Sunday, the AOHR attacked the elections and press and publications laws for infringing upon citizens' constitutional and legal rights.

It said the 1997 temporary press and publications law, recently declared unconstitutional by Jordan's supreme court, "severely constrained the press and journalists, especially by raising the capital requirements for dailies to JD600,000 and for weeklies to JD300,000, as well as imposing tough sanctions on violators of the law."

The report denounced irregularities in voting and tallying procedures during last

November's general elections.

It said the voting lists included 120,000 repeated names, the number of seats allocated to some districts did not reflect the population therein, and voting procedures were interrupted for hours in some districts.

AOHR also reported candidates' and voters' complaints on the authorities' supervision of the elections. It charged that some candidates used government vehicles and other facilities for their campaign.

It also criticised the fact that between 2-3 days elapsed before the government officially announced the winners, the number of voters and the number of votes for each candidate.

In the field of justice, the report said last year witnessed an increase in the number of arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as other violations of personal rights.

As for flagrant violations of the basic right to life, the report cited the case of Samer Muhammad Ziad Khizer, who died as a result of severe beating while in custody.

The report blasted the General Intelligence Department (GID) and the police for repeatedly violating citizens' rights to justice and personal safety, raiding homes without the proper authorisation, beating convicts in order to obtain confessions, confiscating passports or identity documents, and prohibiting visitation rights of prisoners.

The AOHR said also prisoners' rights were seriously violated during the year 1997.

The report presented evidence of violations against the right to work and asserted that some citizens were unjustly prevented from working in some government departments or were refused employment for not producing good conduct certificates.

Senate votes against sexual segregation clause

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Upper House of Parliament (Senate), for the second time in less than four years, on Monday voted against a legal clause passed by the previous Lower House calling for the segregation of sexes at swimming pools, in line with Islamic tradition.

The 30-seat Lower House had endorsed the controversial article in 1992 under a youth welfare draft law that would have granted the Ministry of Youth the right to license "sports and youth centres, including swimming pools and lifeguards."

The previous Lower House, whose term ended in March 1997, was dominated by conservative tribal leaders and Islamists who added a phrase to the article stating that such a licence would be granted on condition that the sexes are "segregated."

Deputies then wanted all new swimming pools, including those at private health clubs, centres and hotels, to be segregated in line with Islamic traditions. Many opposed the idea on grounds it would harm the country's liberal image and deal a blow to the tourism sector, a main hard currency earner.

According to the Constitution, both Houses will hold a joint session after the Senate's second rejection of the amendments introduced by the Lower House. Two-thirds of members in both Houses have to approve the changes before it can be enacted by a Royal Decree.

Parliamentary sources expect the joint session to reject the amendment.

The Senate also endorsed a financial protocol agreement between Jordan and France.

Opposition, professionals denounce threat of U.S. military action against Iraq

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Opposition parties and professional unions on Monday criticised U.S. threats against Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The deputy secretary general of the pro-Syria Ba'ath Progressive Party, Fou'ad Dabour, charged that the objective behind the U.S. "aggression" against Iraq was to "topple the Iraqi government and establish a pro-U.S. regime."

"Any U.S. strike is aggression not only against Iraq, but the Arab Nation as a whole," Mr. Dabour told the 250 professionals gathered at the main hall at the Professional Associations Complex in Shmeisani.

"The government should close the U.S. and British embassies in Amman and deny their naval vessels access to Jordan's only port in their attack against Iraq," Mr. Dabour said.

He urged the government to cut diplomatic ties with Israel, expel its ambassador from Amman and put an end to normalisation of ties with the Jewish state.

"Arab peoples should challenge U.S. and British interests in the region," Mr. Dabour, speaking on behalf of 11 opposition parties, said.

He called on the Arab states to hold an urgent summit of the 21-member Arab League to discuss the escalation between Iraq and the United States.

"Iraq is history, civilisation and the future. America is a barbaric country that wants to destroy history and civilisation," Hussein Mjali, head of the lawyers association, said.

The head of engineers association, Leith Shbeilat, also accused the government of siding with the United States and called for the establishment of a "national government."

"Today Jordan is supporting the aggression... and taking part in the conspiracy against our brothers in Iraq," Mr. Shbeilat charged.

He urged the audience to join a proposed procession on Friday from the Hussein Mosque to Hashimiyah Square downtown in a show of support for Iraq.

Meanwhile, the National Consultative Party (NCP) criticised the U.S. threats against Iraq and called for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

"We denounce any military action against Iraq," said a party statement.

"Any aggression against Iraq is a threat to Arab security as a whole."

"At the moment, we call on Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolutions, [and] we urge the world body to set a timetable for lifting the unjustified sanctions against Iraq," the party statement said.

Mr. Hasanat said the university stipulates that the faculty administration has no right to interfere in the details of any cultural activities if the council obtains the necessary permission.

He said that Mr. Maier, the council's chief, received a double warrant while he and Mr. Asa'ad received a different punishment.

Despite several attempts by the Jordan Times, the head of the Faculty of Science, Nasser Salah, refused to comment on the issue.

Mr. Asa'ad said the faculty's students will stage a sit-in this week, followed by absencing themselves from classes, to protest against the decision.

Mr. Hasanat told the Jordan Times that university security intervened when the film began and tried to end it.

"The university guards tried to attack the students and prevent the show by force," charged Mr. Hasanat.

He added an investigation team was formed by the faculty administration to punish those responsible for the show, accusing the council of not obtaining the necessary permission to hold such a function.

According to Mr. Hasanat, the council obtained permission for the cultural week, but not specifically for the showing of the film.

"The internal law of the

university stipulates that the

faculty administration has

no right to interfere in the

details of any cultural activities

if the council obtains the necessary permission,"

New party hopes to improve ties between Jordanian, Israeli peoples — spokesperson

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's newest political party has said it will seek to cement relations between the Jordanian and Israeli peoples, but will oppose the policies of the current Likud-led Israeli government.

The Jordanian Labour Party (JLP), which was licensed only a few days ago, will also support the needs and aspirations of the working class, JLP Spokesperson Ahmad Qablan told the Jordan Times on Monday in a telephone interview.

Jordan's 20th political party "took its name from our belief that the working class, the man-in-the-street, is the most important contributor to the well-being of this country," Mr. Qablan said.

The JLP represent people from walks of life ranging from school teachers, government employees and housewives.

"Our people come from the bottom, and not from the top," Mr. Qablan said, adding that his party, however, could not be described either as an opposition or a leftist group.

The JLP will strive for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, he said, but, though encouraging students' and businessmen's exchange trips to and from Israel, strongly rejects the headline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, a JLP member — Khalil Baunash — who last week travelled to Israel and met with an Israeli rabbi was expelled from the party on Saturday.

"We did not know anything

about this trip, which was Dr. Baunash's personal initiative," Mr. Qablan pointed out.

"He was expelled because he did not discuss the trip with the party, but portrayed himself as a party envoy."

The JLP held its first congress on Saturday, and elected Mohammad Khataibeh as its secretary general.

In its charter, the party promised to seek to enhance stability and security through respecting and abiding by the existing laws, give due attention to the industrial and agricultural sectors, and support measures to contain unemployment.

The party also promised to strive to safeguard women's constitutional rights, give due attention to the youth and the environment, and fight monopolies.

what's going on

FILM
* "Mr. Bean" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

CONFERENCE
* Conference by the IUCN-the World Conservation Union and the National Committee of the IUCN in Jordan at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. (Starting today and lasting on Feb. 14).

LECTURE
* "German-Arab Relations After 1945" (in English) by Dr. Ali Mahafza at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

Mystery group claims murder as Chirac due on French island

AJACCIO, Corsica (AFP) — A mystery separatist group Monday claimed the political assassination of France's top official in Corsica as President Jacques Chirac prepared to fly in to deliver a firm message against violence on the troubled Mediterranean island.

Police meanwhile arrested a 13th suspect, a dissident nationalist, in the latest of a series of raids Monday targeting nationalist groups suspected of involvement in the killing of the prefect, Claude Erignac.

Friday's assassination of the 60-year-old state official, shot in the back of the head by two men, has shocked France and stunned Corsica. The first murder of such a senior representative on the island, it is seen as the worst act of political violence in more than two decades of unrest.

The claim of responsibility, sent to the local press, was not signed but regarded as authentic because it gave manufacturer's reference numbers for a Beretta 9 mm pistol used by the gunmen that was found at the scene of the killing.

"The action we are claiming today was perfectly thought-out and highly political," the three-page

typewritten statement said. It said the killing "is not the fruit of deviationists or an isolated action by so-called 'renegade soldiers' of the nationalist struggle, or even less a criminal action as some people will not fail to say."

The statement said the gun used came from the Pietrosella police station, and quoted the reference A 00199. The pistol was identified by police at the weekend as having been seized from officers last September in an attack claimed by a previously unknown group, Sampieri.

"Erignac," the claim went on to say, "played an implacable colonialist role in spite of a human face." The prefect's primary task is to maintain Corsica in a state of economic dependence vis-à-vis France.

Erignac was slain in this Corsican capital city Friday evening while on his way to a theatre to attend a concert. Bells tolled across the island at 10:00 a.m. (0900 GMT) and shops, offices and schools observed 15 minutes of silence called by local politicians and trade unions.

Mr. Chirac, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and other members of the government were flying to the

island Monday afternoon to pay a tribute to Erignac.

Flags across France will be dipped to half-mast and prefectures across France will hold a minute of silence coinciding with the start of the Ajaccio ceremony at 4.00 p.m. (1500 GMT).

Corsica has been ravaged by thousands of bombings since the launch of a separatist movement in 1975 but there have been relatively few murders and none of a figure such as Erignac, who represented the authority of the French state.

Birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte and ruled by France since 1768 after five centuries of Genoese sovereignty, Corsica is a tourist haven of beaches and high peaks, but it is dogged by high unemployment and under-development.

Tests for traces of firearms on two suspects hauled in immediately after the shooting have proved inconclusive and the pair are expected to be released, police said.

In dawn raids, police picked up a dozen suspects, including dissident nationalists and associates, as well as common criminals, police said. A 13th man described as a dissident

nationalist, Marcel Lorenzoni, was also later detained by a crack police unit.

France's top anti-terrorist investigators and magistrates have been rushed to the island in the wake of the killing. Airports and ports are under strict surveillance and sharpshooters have been posted around key government buildings.

Investigators from the outset suggested the murder might be the work of dissidents from one of the many Corsican nationalist groups.

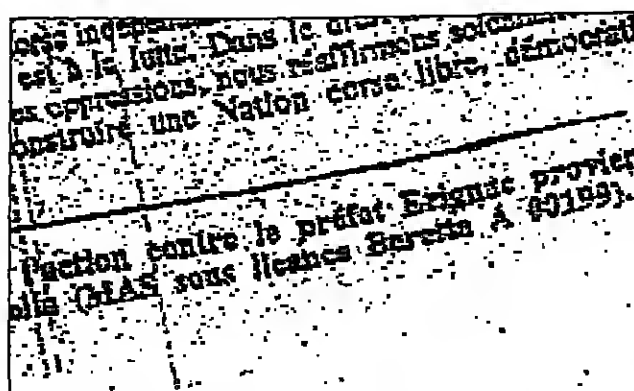
Erignac's murder came just two weeks after one group, the FLNC-Historic wing, announced an end to a seven-month ceasefire, saying France's eight-month-old Socialist-led government had done nothing to meet their demands.

But the group's political wing, A Cuncolta Nazionalista, was one of several nationalist groups which condemned the shooting.

Nationalist political groups, most supported by armed factions, are badly divided. Many of their leaders were killed in a deadly fratricidal war in 1995 and suspicions linger of Mafia-style links with some of the separatists.



Picture dated Jan. 10, 1980, shows Corsican nationalist leader Marcel Lorenzoni who was arrested in early morning raids across the island (AFP photo)



The unsigned communiqué in which unidentified Corsican separatists claim responsibility for the killing of Claude Erignac; the document has been considered genuine by police because it includes the serial number of the murder weapon (Reuters photo)

Afghan forces trade fire, as aid workers battle to help quake victims

KABUL (AFP) — Rescue workers Monday told of the devastation they found in a quake-hit region of northern Afghanistan as they battled to distribute emergency aid, amid reports of renewed fighting between the Taliban and the opposition alliance.

As relief efforts gathered pace, initial reports from a humanitarian team in the northern province of Takhar substantiated fears that around 4,000 people or more may have perished in last Wednesday's earthquake.

A team from Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the first to arrive on the scene, were told in one flattened village that 1,800 people had been killed there alone.

Other 300 died in a nearby half-destroyed village, the MSF team said in a message received by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at its office in Pakistan.

At least a dozen villages in the remote region were hit by the quake in the midst of Afghanistan's harsh winter.

Relief teams are having to deal with aftershocks and the cold as well as fears of more fighting between the Islamic Taliban militia and the opposition alliance, which controls the Takhar province.

Afghan sources said the two sides exchanged artillery shells Monday around Bangi area between Takhar and neighbouring Kunduz held by the Taliban militia.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), a private Pakistan-based information agency, said both sides blamed each other for the duel.

AIP quoted a spokesman for the Taliban as saying the Islamic warriors would not

launch any military operation until early Tuesday, when a ceasefire they declared is due to expire.

Although estimates of the death toll have fluctuated, two major aftershocks have claimed 250 more lives, according to the Afghan embassy in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe.

ICRC sources said a plane flew to Khawajaghar airfield near Rostaq Monday, carrying medical kits and some European Commission (EC) officials.

A convoy of trucks loaded with emergency medical supplies, thousands of blankets and other relief material, including plastic sheets for shelters and clothing, was on its way to the region from northern Mazar-i-Sharif, they said.

A team left northern Kunduz in the morning, headed for Rostaq with medical help, the sources said.

The United Nations agencies have also mobilised resources for the relief operations and the EC humanitarian office announced Saturday it had set aside \$2.2 million for the relief effort.

An ICRC spokesman, Juan Martinez, said it was possible 4,000 people may have been killed following the reports from the MSF team.

"Maybe the figure of 4,000 is possible. It could be possible because of the latest figures," he said here.

The information from MSF reported that more than 2,000 had been killed in two villages alone.

The opposition has accused the militia of being indifferent to the plight of the quake victims.

Bangladesh tribal rebels turn in weapons ahead of surrender

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) — The first group of rebels Monday began turning in their weapons to the army in Bangladesh's southeastern Khagrachari hill district ahead of a formal surrender marking the end of a 22-year insurgency.

The Shanti Bahini rebels were handing in their arms for military security checks before Tuesday's historic weapons surrender at the Khagrachari stadium in line with a landmark peace pact signed in December, security officials said.

Government leaders, including Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, and tribal leaders witnessed the event, which is a major part of the peace treaty.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed will Tuesday formally receive weapons from tribal chief Jotinudra Bodhipriya Lama, alias Shantu Lama, who heads the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political wing of tribal Shanti Bahini (Peace Force) rebels.

Politicians, diplomats and dignitaries will attend the ceremony to be broadcast live on state-run television and radio, officially disbanding the Shanti Bahini and marking the end of 22 years of bloodshed in which 25,000 people have been killed.

Of 2,000 insurgents, 600

will give up their weapons — mostly Chinese-made AK-47 assault rifles, mortars and various guns — at the main ceremony and 200 others will surrender them Wednesday. The rest will follow in three phases until Feb. 28.

Those who turn in their weapons will receive 50,000 taka (\$1,063) in return to help start a new life.

A ban on demonstrations has also been in force in the southeastern Chittagong port city and Chittagong Hill Tracts since Friday.

The ban was possibly in response to plans by the opposition, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, for a nationwide demonstration and a general strike in Chittagong and the hill districts.

The BNP has opposed the treaty and demanded that it be withdrawn deeming it to be a sell-out to India, and claiming it compromised the country's sovereignty.

Bangladesh Friday announced it will pardon tribal rebels who surrender their weapons Tuesday, when an amnesty will take effect.

An announcement by the home ministry said the "criminal cases and arrest warrants against them will be withdrawn and legal steps will be taken for release of those who are (now) in prison."

"No cases will be filed or arrest warrant issued or punishment will be given to any members only on the charges of his or her involvement with PCJSS activities after surrender of weapons and return to normal life," it said.

Those who have been tried in absentia would also be exempted of punishment, it added.

The amnesty will be applicable to all permanent residents of the Chittagong Hill Tracts involved with the PCJSS.

Since 1994, a total of 51,462 tribesmen who had fled to India's Tripura state because of the insurgency have returned to Bangladesh and repatriations would continue until the last of the remaining 13,000 returned.

The former tribal rebels have been fighting a bush war since 1974 for autonomy and the expulsion of Bengali-speaking settlers from the scenic mineral and natural gas-rich hill tracts region, bordering India and Myanmar.

Under the agreement the government has pledged to pump in millions of taka in development into the area, and it is hoped foreign gas and oil companies will slowly move in.

Meanwhile tribesmen who fled to India during the insurgency are also being repatriated.



Cambodian opposition figure Sam Rainsy blasts Cambodian leader Hun Sen at a Phnom Penh court house, accusing him of seeking to undermine opposition parties ahead of a July general election (Reuters photo)

Former Khmer Rouge deputy premier back in Cambodian capital

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Former Khmer Rouge Deputy Premier Ieng Sary has returned to Phnom Penh for only the second time since the guerrillas were ousted from power in 1979.

Pol Pot's former foreign minister and brother-in-law, who split from the hardline central leadership two years ago and now cooperates with Phnom Penh, arrived in the capital Sunday accompanied by his wife, Khieu Thirith, the sister of Pol Pot's first wife, Khieu Ponnary.

His return Sunday also comes just one week after two of his top aides officially joined a new political party.

Ieng Sary, who had a luncheon meeting with powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen Monday and plans to meet other senior officials, told reporters that his visit was not politically related.

"I just came to visit the capital and I will stay for a while longer," he said Monday, adding, "This is just a family visit."

He said he would not stand as a candidate in July's scheduled election but that members of his Democratic National Union

Movement (DNUM) would be running for parliament as members of registered political parties.

"I will not participate in the coming elections but DNUM members are free to join any political party," he said, adding he asked those who took that route to remain loyal to the DNUM's principles of peace and national reconciliation.

Ieng Sary arrived in Phnom Penh exactly seven days after two of his top aides, personal secretary Long Norin and former division commander Prum Su, joined a new political party headed by the acting president of the National Assembly.

The two men joined the Sangkum Thmei (New Society) party headed by Loy Sim Cheang, a former senior official in the royalist FUNCINPEC party of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Analysts said the move was likely designed to allow the DNUM to put up candidates for parliament in areas they control without attracting adverse attention from those concerned with the group's past.

The DNUM controls the

gem- and timber-rich areas of Pailin and Phnom Malai on Cambodia's northwest border with Thailand and despite officially coming under control of Phnom Penh operates with relative autonomy.

In August, 1996, Ieng Sary and his men split with the Khmer Rouge central leadership and established relations with the government.

In return, Ieng Sary was granted a royal pardon that lifted a 1979 death sentence against him on genocide charges and immunised him from prosecution under 1994 legislation that bans the Khmer Rouge.

Ieng Sary and his wife were members of the Khmer Rouge's central committee which is held responsible for the deaths of as many as two million Cambodians during its 1975 to 1979 "killing fields" regime.

Ieng Sary first returned to Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge were ousted from power last November when he said the DNUM continued to support the government following the violent July ouster of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Cardinal denies church turned blind eye to paedophile priests

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Cardinal Godfried Danneels, the leader of Belgium's Roman Catholic community, made an unprecedented court appearance here Monday to reject charges that the church had been negligent in dealing with repeated sexual abuse of children.

The church "severely condemns" acts of paedophilia.

Cardinal Danneels told the trial of Andre Vander Lijn, a 63-year-old priest

accused of having abused 10 children in his Brussels parish over the last 30 years.

"It is particularly grave for a priest to breach the relation of trust that exists between the clergy and the faithful," Cardinal Danneels said.

The cardinal, a staunch traditionalist once tipped as a future pope, had refused to take the stand at an earlier hearing in the case but was ordered to appear by the trial judge, Claire de Gryse.

Congo strongman's aggrieved ex-militia go on looting spree

KINSHASA (AFP) — Dozens of aggrieved ex-militiamen who helped bring back power to Congo's President Denis Sassou Nguesso went on a looting spree Monday in the capital Brazzaville, where witnesses and the radio also reported shots.

The worst pillage was in the northern Ouenze district, where young former Cobra militia fighters demanding incorporation into the security forces raided several shops before riot police restored order, witnesses said.

"Some stores were looted today in Ouenze by young militiamen who were not selected to join the ranks of the police, the army or the gendarmerie (paramilitary police)," one resident told AFP in Kinshasa by telephone.

Another local source said that riot police restored order in the north of Brazzaville, which lies across the Congo river from Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Official Radio Congo, meanwhile, said that automatic weapons fire broke

out in Baongo, the southern part of the capital, around a filling station close to the street market known as "Total", the biggest in Brazzaville.

The radio gave no explanation for the shooting, but said that it had caused panic in districts close to the market.

One witness said that former militiamen who backed General Sassou Nguesso during the civil war between June and October last year against the elected president Pascal Lissouba, were furious that they had been turned down as members of the armed forces following medical check-ups at the M'Pila military base in Brazzaville.

Since the war which saw the return to power of Sassou Nguesso, shooting blamed on the Cobras or uncontrolled armed gangs have often been heard in Brazzaville.

Tuesday last week, the city's Roman Catholic archbishop, Barthélemy Batantou, publicly spoke out against summary executions and the setting of scores by violent means.

Bush fires flare on Sumatra island

JAKARTA (R) — Bush fires have flared on Indonesia's Sumatra Island while others continue to burn in Borneo, government officials said Monday.

They said four "hot spots" or areas affected by fires were recorded by satellite imagery Friday in Riau and two others in Aceh, both on Sumatra. Meanwhile, 19 hot spots were seen in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo.

"The fires have spread to Sumatra and the fires continue to flare up in Kalimantan," said an official at the Indonesian Aeronautics and Space Agency (LAPAN).

Widespread Indonesian fires, many of them in Kalimantan and Sumatra, raged for months last year. Smoke drifted across south-east Asia causing health problems in neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia.

The smog even reached some parts of Thailand and the Philippines.

The official Antara news agency reported Monday that the fires which were raging at a forest reserve in east Kalimantan were caused by farmers who wanted to clear land.

It quoted Forestry Minister Djumaluddin Suryadikusumo as saying that satellite photographs had indicated the fires were caused by farmers, adding

the ministry had sent an aircraft to help put out the blaze.

The government earlier said that 265,000 hectares of forests in the archipelago were burnt during the fires of the extended dry season in 1997.

The spread of the fires, many of them deliberately lit to clear land for agricultural purposes, was blamed on the prolonged dry season caused by the El Nino weather effect originating in the Pacific Ocean.

Shanghai commemorates centenary of Zhou Enlai's birth

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Shanghai is producing 10,000 bronze mirrors to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Zhou Enlai on March 5, Xinhua news agency said Monday.

The hand-polished mirrors, 100 millimetres in diameter, reveal under a bright light an image of Zhou Enlai and the six Chinese characters "Our Beloved Premier" on its face, the report said.

On the reverse, there are

16 characters expressing the love the Chinese people cherish for the late premier, it said.

The mirrors are numbered and bear the signature of designer Sheng Zongyi, the man who dis-

covered why bronze mirrors from the Western Han Dynasty (B.C. 206-23) can reveal an image under bright sunlight.

Apart from the mirrors, Shanghai newspapers have been publishing arti-

cles about Zhou Enlai who died of cancer on Jan. 8, 1976, while a documentary on his foreign affairs achievements, including footage never shown before, is being aired on television.

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Reaching point of no return

IN CONTRAST to the war launched against Iraq in the wake of its invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the military preparations this time lack the full support of international community. Absent at this time is a clear-cut objective around which the comity of nations can rally. In 1991, there was overwhelming Arab support for ending the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and punishing the Iraqi regime for its attempt to annex a sovereign and independent Arab state. This time, there is really no strong cause to rally the Arab World against Iraq.

The implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions is not an immediate or pressing issue on which the Arab Nation can mobilise against a sister Arab country, especially at a time when many other Security Council resolutions remain unfulfilled and disregarded. The Arab capitals cannot be expected to be impressed with the sudden call for the implementation of international legitimacy, because a weaker and defenceless Iraq is anathema to Arab national security. Most Arab capitals have quarrels with Iraq's leadership and its management of the country's affairs, not over Baghdad's possession of weapons of mass destruction, since such weapons have already been introduced to the region by Israel.

On the international level, there is an absence of consensus in the Security Council, unlike the case in 1991. Three permanent members of the council — Russia, France and China — are on record as either opposed to military strikes against Iraq or having strong reservations under the current circumstances. A similar disarray exists among the non-permanent members of the council. Moreover, only a handful of countries outside the Security Council club have endorsed the need for the resort to a military solution to the standoff with Baghdad over free and unimpeded access for U.N. inspectors to all sites in Iraq. Even Pope John Paul II is vehemently opposed to a military strike.

The absence of a clear vision or strategy behind the recent escalation in the Gulf region is also troubling to Arab and non-Arab countries. Military strikes, no matter how devastating, may not succeed in putting an end to non-conventional bombs that Iraq allegedly still possesses. Equally important is that the declared objective of the military strike would not be meant to change the Iraqi regime. So what is the objective? A devastated Iraq? More suffering for the Iraqi people who have already suffered enough under more than seven years of sanctions? Not to mention the risk of causing widespread civil strife, famine, and even divisions that could lead to the partition of the Arab country?

There is no doubt that the military preparations have developed a momentum of their own and a strike may have become irreversible even if Iraq made all the necessary concessions that are required of it. Washington and London cannot deploy such a massive force in the air and in the sea indefinitely and at a high cost. The U.S. and Britain cannot reassemble their forces everytime Baghdad makes a manoeuvre to end the sanctions. That is why the conflict appears to be coming to a head, albeit not under the circumstances that Washington and London may have hoped for.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh criticised the motion submitted by 23 deputies seeking a vote of no confidence for Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi for allowing Jordan Television to broadcast the Arab Song Festival organised by Orbit Satellite Station. He said the song festival has brought some joy to the Jordanian people who are overburdened with political, social and economic woes and was welcomed by the majority of people in the Kingdom. Had the 23 deputies submitted a motion demanding that the government cancel its amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law to allow the 13 weeklies to publish again they would have won the support of the public. Dr. Faneh said. But he said these deputies seem to be unaware of the facts and the realities of the situation in Jordan where people like to live in a democracy and enjoy freedom. These deputies who claim to have been disturbed by Orbit broadcasters presenting the show claim that women were improperly dressed and were presenting the festival's programmes, Dr. Faneh said. He said this claim is totally false because viewers at home claim otherwise. He said Jordan Television continues to present viewers with movies and television programmes of all kinds, and there have been no complaints. According to Dr. Faneh, the Orbit festival was truly a cultural event which should be admired as helped to attract tourists to Jordan.

Al Dustour's Orelb Rimawi criticised Syria for its present stand vis-a-vis the Iraq crisis saying Damascus is satisfying itself with statements that it does not support a military strike against Baghdad. According to Rimawi, while Syria raised a hue and cry over Jordan's sending a sole army officer to observe limited Turkish-Israeli military exercises, it is keeping silent over the current flurry of military activity against Iraq. The writer charged that it is because the regime in Damascus harbours hatred towards the Baghdad regime that Syria decided to join Iran in an alliance against Baghdad during the first Gulf war and to join the U.S.-led coalition against Baghdad in the second Gulf war. Rimawi said that Damascus moved slightly towards improving its ties with Baghdad only when the latter's relations with Jordan began to show some strains and in a bid to open markets for Syrian products in Iraq. The writer said the lack of confidence between Damascus and Baghdad continues to help the enemies of the Arab Nation hatch conspiracies against not only Iraq but also Syria and the other Arab countries.

View from the Fourth Circle

From Rachel's tomb to the passage of the slaves in Gaza

By Rami G. Khouri

GAZA — Everything that is good and bad about the ongoing Oslo peace process between Palestinians and Israelis is quickly obvious to the visitor to Gaza, which has emerged, along with the West Bank town of Ramallah, as the unofficial joint capital of the unofficial Palestinian state.

The gains, disappointments, and indignities of the peace process to date are delicately balanced in the minds of most Palestinians.

After a week of intensive discussions with Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and other places in the West Bank and Gaza, I sensed a slight momentum towards greater skepticism among most Palestinians, though directed at slightly different targets: ordinary citizens blame Israel along with the arrogance and corruption of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), professionals and well-off members of the elite blame Israel and the unfairness of modern history, PNA officials blame Israel and the United States.

Beneath the verbal expressions of deep political discontent and the real pain of stubborn economic distress, however, is a more positive parallel reality: for the first time in modern history, several million Palestinians are getting on with the business of building their own country, establishing their own institutions, taking charge of their own lives, charting their own future.

To be rid of the Israeli occupation — both its petty humiliations and more serious large-scale land expropriations — is a tremendous and still valuable gain to those Palestinians living in the PNA areas.

But this gain is being increasingly diluted or even offset in the minds of many Palestinians by several related problems: the poor state of the economy, the political autocracy of the PNA and many of its institutions and officials, the hard-line Israeli policy on further withdrawals and re-deployments, the continued Israeli expansion of settlements, destruction of Palestinian homes and confiscation of lands, and the perceived indifference of the world to this difficult situation in which many Palestinians find themselves.

Perhaps most troubling for Palestinians is the colonial and apartheid-like nature of the situation in which they find themselves today — combined with the frightening thought that the present difficult transitional phase may, in fact, turn out to be a long-term option for Israel and the world, regardless of what the Palestinians themselves may think of it. The many personal, economic and political manifestations of the ugly colonial relationship between Israel and Palestine are felt daily by every Palestinian. The situation is most visible in the many checkpoints and roadblocks that physically separate Israelis and Palestinians, the whites and blacks of God's increasingly odd holy land. Palestinians move around according to the Israeli-Palestinian version of the former South African pass laws. Palestinians who do not have

the proper identity card or permit think twice about going into Israeli-controlled areas; Israelis, also victims of the pass laws mentality in their own way, generally do not venture into Palestinian areas.

The glaring parallels with South Africa of the past are awkward and uncomfortable — for both sides — and probably have been exacerbated in the short term by the Oslo peace process.

Most striking in this respect is the physical separation of these two communities that live in such close proximity and share so many cultural, moral and historical dimensions of their lives. The Jewish colonies and settlements in the West Bank and Gaza appear even more alien and intrusive, with their separate roads, many guards, and a social-architectural character so obviously exogenous to this predominantly Arab land.

Not surprisingly, the most recent flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence occurs nowadays around Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem. This otherwise holy site now also has a new dimension that is a moral and political disgrace, disguised by a new large stone wall, traffic detours, check points and many Israeli armed guards on the ground and on rooftops, separating it from the local Palestinian population. (It is ironic that when Rachel, Jacob's wife, first approached the land of Palestine, or Canaan, after the journey from Mesopotamia, the local "prince of the land" Hamor the Hivite and his son Shechem said to the approaching Israelites, "you shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you," and then said to their own people about the Israelites "... these men are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them" (Genesis 34:10-21).)

Today, it seems, the land is not large enough for two peoples, but the separation of Israelis and Palestinians is being attempted in an unbalanced manner that will trigger greater tension and violence in the near future, rather than long-term security and stability. This is most self-evident here in Gaza, where the population expresses bitter resentment against the cruel combination of Israeli and Palestinian self-indulgent arrogance of power. The two are very different in nature, for sure, yet similar in their consequences: ordinary Palestinians feel increasingly despondent, worried and helpless about their future well-being.

There is a long, covered passageway that tens of thousands of Palestinians walk through every day at the Erez crossing point between Gaza and Israel. The Palestinians call it "mamarr el-abeed", or "the passage of the slaves (or, the blacks)".

It is not surprising that Palestine is about the only place in the Arab World that has seen some spontaneous demonstrations of grassroots support for the Iraqi leadership in its current face-off with the U.S. People who see themselves as slaves will act like slaves. They have nothing

or little to lose, and their situation cannot get much worse; thus even war in the region is seen by some as a possible portent of change for the better.

More patient Palestinians recognise that their lives have improved somewhat with the Oslo peace process, and that the change under way towards a sovereign Palestinian state is long-term by nature. They argue that they will not forever suffer the current harsh conditions of apartheid-like separation, confinement, roads for whites only, and regimes of travel permits and identity cards. They point to the many Palestinian institutions that are being born daily, the growing control they enjoy over their lives, the revitalisation of Palestinian cultural identity, and other signs of a national community being reconstituted and a state being born.

Many argue that Palestine is no better or worse than other Arab or Third World countries, and that the yardstick of measurement and comparison should be realism, not idealism or jingoism.

There are no absolutes in Palestine today, no clear communal agreement on whether things are mostly good or bad, improving or deteriorating.

The Oslo process has more public critics than supporters; but in the quiet, dogged determination of their everyday lives most Palestinians work hard to extract equitable benefits from a rather unbalanced and burdensome political process.

Most people in Palestine, ordinary folks and members of the elite alike, share a sense of disappointment; they feel unable to impact more directly on the birth of the state of Palestine and the attainment of Palestinian communal and national rights for which they have struggled for much of this century. It is not clear if this disappointment will turn to rage, violence and instability, directed at the PNA and Israel, or if it will spur Palestinians to greater diligence and efficacy in their internal governance and their dealings with Israel and the Arab World.

Despite their difficult, apartheid-like, daily life context, for the first time in modern history the Palestinians themselves can influence the future direction of their national condition, rights and aspirations. For this reason, I suspect, those Palestinians who see their glass as half full will ultimately prevail over those who see it as half empty.

The passage of the slaves, like serfdom, colonialism, and apartheid elsewhere, is a fleeting phenomenon, doomed to give way to the righteous political morality of those whose hearts and lands are big enough to find room for their brothers and neighbours. What we witness today in Palestine and Israel is a dramatic lesson in how not to achieve this goal; perhaps we must pass through this experience in order to find the alternative route towards equal rights and coexistence, so that Rachel can finally rest in peace, and all her Arab and Israeli Semitic cousins can aspire to justice and peace while they are still alive.

The green parrots of Ankara and other displaced persons

By Dr. A. Clare Brandabur

WALKING IN Ankara one late September day in 1995, I suddenly noticed a great green bird sitting quietly at about shoulder height in the shrubbery. My immediate assumption was that someone's pet parrot had escaped, and I looked to see if the bird's leg was banded. On reflection I decided not to disturb this regal creature and went on my way to meet a friend for lunch near the mausoleum of Kemal Ataturk.

Only a few days later I saw another of these stunning birds, flying into the trees not far from the British embassy in Cankaya. I remarked on this peculiar sighting to a Turkish colleague at Middle East Technical University and learned that Ankara had of late acquired a fairly large colony of these exotic birds: the war in the east had driven them many hundreds of miles westward to the safety of the capital and the forest which surrounds the imposing memorial to the founder of modern Turkey.

"Don't feel sorry for them," my friend advised with a wry smile. "They are merely economic migrants."

These memories came back to me with great force recently when I read of the hundreds of refugees fleeing from Turkey in unseaworthy ships, robbed and shipwrecked and starving, desperate to reach the safety of Italy and perhaps to find a new life in western Europe. BBC interviewed a family in the shanty towns of Istanbul whose village, like over 3,000 others, has been demolished by the Turkish military, the livestock driven away or herded into trucks, the men shot or rounded up and imprisoned, the houses and

outholdings burned, the women and children left to go on foot to the nearest city with scarcely more than the clothes on their backs.

Adana, Mersin, Diyarbakir, Ankara, Izmir, and of course Istanbul are inundated with thousands of these migrants, for whom there are no adequate social services, no jobs, and no future. Who are they? Many of them are Kurds, though it is a crime in Turkey to name them ("Mountain Turks" was the chosen euphemism for many years). And journalists who dare to talk about the reality of the Kurdish plight, in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere, find themselves in prison. I remember seeing the mayor of one of these destroyed villages interviewed on Turkish television, where he clearly identified the attackers of his village as Turkish military in uniform. His body was found a few days later. Yet Turkey becomes indignant when it is suggested that these people are political refugees: they are, we are asked to believe, simply economic migrants — which suggests they are opportunists who merely want larger refrigerators and fancier cars!

About the same year I read about a professor of sociology who had just been released from prison after having served several years on charges of endangering national security because of his book tracing the plight of the Kurds to the failure of Kemal Ataturk to honour the promises made to them at the time of the war of national liberation. This scholar argued that while it was expedient, Turks and Kurds were urged to fight to drive out the Greeks, the Italians, and the British, to consolidate a new diminished Turkish state. All for one and one for all, the Kurds fought valiantly beside their Turkish brothers. Yet

when the war was won and the dust cleared, the new constitution of Turkey was drafted with no mention of Kurdish rights, Kurdish language or Kurdish culture: they were expected to learn Turkish and assimilate into the melting pot, forgetting that they were a distinct people with an ancient history and a unique tradition and language. Occasionally Kurdish newspapers are given licences only to find their offices closed down and their papers confiscated soon after.

The journalist who interviewed this courageous sociologist asked him whether or not he had continued to hold those beliefs for which he had been imprisoned. Yes, he answered, and his first act on being released had been to communicate this point of view urgently to President Demirel. He remained convinced that only if this history was understood could the modern Turkish administration effectively address the problem and draft legislation which would give Kurdish citizens their human and civic rights. He felt strongly that the violence of the PKK would never diminish until the basic problem of Kurdish rights in the Turkish state were admitted and established officially and legally. Oddly, he pointed out with a kind of resigned amusement, his book had not been banned — only its author!

The book had not been imprisoned though its author had! And what were his plans? He said he expected to be sent back to prison as an unrepentant menace to the peace and tranquility of the nation — as indeed he was. Because it is a crime in Turkey to suggest that Kemal Ataturk could have made a mistake, these useful and intelligent ideas were refused and the author, like any one else who

dares to champion the Kurdish people or even suggest that they are the victims of a massive Viet Nam style campaign, was sentenced to prison.

To his great credit, Turkey's most famous novelist Yasar Kemal, has spoken out fearlessly on behalf of his people: for this support of a democratic society, he has been charged with "separatist propaganda" and recently took refuge in Sweden, not for the first time in his life. Anyone who has read the Cukurova Trilogy: The Wind from the Plain, Iron Earth — Copper Sky, and The Undying Grass, is aware of Kemal's love for his country and would be immediately disposed to accept his statement that most Turkish Kurds do not want a separate state but only to have their cultural heritage recognised and allowed to flourish in Turkey.

The Kurdish community in Turkey suffers from a common contemporary phenomenon: the destruction and/or dispersal of ethnic communities considered expendable by some of the great powers. To resist such destruction, the freedom fighter swims in the sea of the people, but authoritarian regimes no longer scruple to destroy the sea. In Algeria, in Guatemala, in Chile, in Mexico, in Palestine, as in Turkey, whole villages and neighbourhoods are being attacked, destroyed, besieged, to crush resistance with the aim of expropriating land and destroying the fabric of indigenous communities. In the case of Iraq, it is the whole country that is being embargoed. And when people, like the green parrots, flee from this assault, they are called "economic migrants." Let's call this the new world disorder.

Entangled in fears

To the editor:

ALTHOUGH I have vehemently disagreed with Rami G. Khouri in the past (particularly over Iraq) I always find his articles fascinating, illuminating and incisive. However, in his last article he surpassed himself. In my relatively brief time here in Jordan I have not read a better article than his piece on "Visiting the Holocaust Museum, and beyond" (Jordan Times, Jan. 27).

Anyone who sincerely wants a dignified peace be they Arab or Jew, Palestinian or Israeli or anyone else should read his article, because without exaggeration he passionately wrote about the depths of wounds — on both sides — that must be healed. It reminded me of something David K. Shipley wrote in his book Arab and Jews:

"...the future guarantees that Arabs and Jews will remain close neighbours in this weary land, entangled in each others' fears. They will not escape from one another. They will not find peace in treaties, or in victories. They will find it, if at all, by looking into each others' eyes."

I wish the Israeli government would reopen their eyes and look at those around them as their predecessors did so courageously.

Lawrence J. Dearing
 Amman

LETTERS

Hypocrisy in democracy

To the editor:

I READ with utter dismay the articles in our daily newspapers regarding the heated debate over the "decency" of the Third Arab Song Festival. It is bewildering to witness such hypocrisy in what is claimed to be a democratic country. A total of 23 deputies joined forces to shun the endless efforts of the Minister of Information and Jordan Television to broadcast live and for the first time in Jordan such a festival and to cater to the needs and requests of the Jordanian citizens. Jordan was privileged enough to host such a festival. Is this how we repay this honour? Was anyone chained to their seat and forced to watch this broadcast festival till the late hours of the night? I advise these deputies to exercise their right to choose whether to watch this festival or not and whether to turn on their satellites or not.

Name withheld upon request

'Railroading practices'

To the editor:

YESTERDAY I had the misfortune of attending the General Assembly meeting of the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI). As soon as the meeting started we were asked to vote on a statement prepared by the ACI stipulating the rejection of the establishment of other chambers of industries, backing the new law prepared by the ACI, and a recommendation to set up a committee to discuss the above. This statement was read and not given to us in writing to allow us to read and digest it before voting on its content. This has been done before, and frankly I believe that it was an insult to the intelligence of all the people gathered; it also demonstrates once more the constant railroading practices applied by ACI and why some people decided to split the union of the industry in Jordan.

I believe a committee should be set up that includes all affiliations of the industry, including the ministry, which will study and recommend the best way to go forward whether it is with a number of chambers or one chamber only. We should not accept to participate in a committee where the results of its finding are predetermined. May God help us.

Marwan Nassar
 General Manager
 Jordan Rubber Industries

January 10, 1998
G. Khouri

Aviation authority announces five-year JD63m modernisation plan

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) plans to spend JD63 million between 1998 and 2002 to develop the air transport and civil aviation sector and adjust to the requirements of the economic, technological and social developments in the air transport industry, according to Jasser Ziyad, CAA director general.

In a statement released Monday, Capt. Ziyad said the five-year development plan is needed to meet the needs of the approximately 27 international airlines, as well as Jordan's national air carrier and passengers from around the world, currently using the facilities at the Kingdom's airports.

He said the plan takes the requirements of air transport services in the coming century into consideration and aims at modernising services and providing training to Jordanian personnel involved in the industry.

According to Capt. Ziyad, JD29.91 million out of the total will be used to modernise security, air conditioning, lighting, and water systems, as well as elevators and maintenance and other services at the Queen Alia International Airport.

This allocation, he added, will also be spent on maintaining roads and runways within the airport's perimeter.

More than JD3.4 million is to be spent on facilities at the Amman Civil Airport at Marka in eastern Amman. This sum will be used to modernise and increase the efficiency of air navigation systems, modernise equipment and machinery, and train personnel, according to Capt. Ziyad.

Nearly JD8.5 million will be used to modernise the Aqaba airport's passenger lounge, the runways, the water network system, and the high voltage electric power system.

More than JD21 million has been allocated for CAA employee training and financing research and consulting services, as well as replacing furniture and installing a computer network, Capt. Ziyad added.

He pointed out that the CAA's annual revenues from services offered to the various airlines are estimated at JD35 million this year, while the CAA's budget for 1998 has been fixed at JD4.2 million.

Capt. Ziyad said a team of air transport experts is expected in Amman from the U.S. in the coming few days to revise the five-year plan and offer consulting services financed by the U.S. trade and development agency.

Egypt returns remains of two Israeli soldiers killed in 1973 war

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Egypt has returned the remains of two Israeli soldiers killed during the 1973 Israeli-Arab war, army radio reported on Monday.

The skeletal remains were found in the Sinai desert and were handed over in recent days to General Shimon Hefetz, military aide to President Ezer Weizman, the radio said.

The army plans to send the remains to London for genetic testing to confirm they are among the 18 Israeli soldiers, four of them pilots, who went missing on Egyptian battlefields during the war, the radio said.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak agreed to return the soldiers' remains during a meeting last year with Mr. Weizman in Alexandria, the radio said.

'Non-terrorist' killings up 60 per cent in Israel — police

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Criminal murders unrelated to the Israeli-Arab conflict soared 60 per cent in Israel last year, according to police figures published on Monday.

During the 12-month period, 217 people were killed in Israel, 142 of them in what the police described as "non-terrorist" events. This represents a 60 per cent increase in civil murders over 1996 when there were 189 killings, 120 of them non-terrorist.

Twenty-one of those killed last year in Arab attacks died in two suicide bombings by Islamists in Jerusalem in July and September.

Among the civilian murders were 16 women slain by their husbands or companions, a record in Israel, the police report said.

In 50 per cent of those cases, the woman had filed a prior complaint against her partner with police, it said.

Quake hits western Iran, no casualties reported

TEHRAN (R) — An earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale shook western Iran on Monday, but there were no initial reports of casualties, the official IRNA news agency said.

The agency said the earthquake's epicentre was in a suburb of the provincial capital of Khoranabad, Lorestan, 370 km southwest of Tehran.

"No reports of damage or injuries have been received so far," IRNA said. The earthquake was reported at 9:04 local time.

Earthquakes measuring between four and five are powerful enough to cause heavy damage in a populated area. Iran has been hit by three major earthquakes in the past year.

Iranian man goes mad after receiving 'big money'

TEHRAN (AFP) — A poor Iranian villager lost his mind after winning a relatively large sum of money in a court case, a newspaper reported Monday.

The man, who was not identified, received five million rials (\$1,000) in cash as "blood money" in compensation for the death of his sister in a car accident. Resalat newspaper said.

The man, "who had never seen more than 300,000 rials (\$60) in one sum in his life," lost his mind after seeing the blood money handed out to him in small denomination bills.

His relatives in the western city of Hamedan told the paper that they had so far spent two million rials of the money to cure him, but to no avail.

Jordan will not support military action against Iraq — Monarch

(Continued from page 1)

the consequences. I am afraid that we are not far away from this situation."

The King said that an Arab summit should also tackle the peace process deadline in addition to the Iraq-U.N. crisis. "Concerning an Arab summit I don't know what subjects are to be discussed but I think there is more than one topic: the Palestinian question, the stalled peace process which is very serious, and the crisis at hand which I hope will be addressed not with the use of force. Our contacts are continuing with Egypt and with other Arab countries to organise a meeting and pursue dialogue and objective discussion so that we can achieve the aspired results."

In his forty five minute meeting with the British premier at Downing Street, the two sides con-

ducted a comprehensive evaluation of the regions developments focusing on the stalled peace process and intensifying efforts to give it momentum to end the present deadlock.

Mr. Blair who stressed the need for both parties to fulfil the agreements noted that the European Union (EU) has urged the Israeli government to implement the redeployment plan without prior conditions. Mr. Blair expressed EU desire to play an effective role in support of U.S. efforts in this regard.

King Hussein and Mr. Blair agreed to follow up consultations and contacts over the peace process. They also agreed that there should be no double standard positions regarding Security Council resolutions, otherwise this would adversely affect the peace process.

U.S. denies plans for Kurdish state in Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

past had a personal friendship with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, on Jan. 30 ruled out the use of an allied airbase in southern Turkey for U.S. air strikes against Iraq.

Shortly after Mr. Ecevit's announcement, conservative Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz overrode his deputy and said Ankara would consider any U.S. proposal for the use of the Incirlik base for air strikes against Baghdad.

But Mr. Yilmaz said the Turkish parliament would rule whether or not to let Washington use the base.

A U.S.-led multinational force based at Incirlik staged extensive bombing missions against Iraqi targets during the Gulf war.

Turkey, which is fighting its own separatist Kurdish rebellion in the country's southeast, fears that the creation of a Kurdish state in neighbouring northern Iraq will set a dangerous precedent.

An estimated eight to 12 million Kurds live in Turkey, principally in the southeast. A further three million live in Iran, four million in northern Iraq under U.N. protection, and one million in Syria. There are also small Kurdish populations in the former Soviet Union.

An allied air force of U.S., British and Turkish planes using Incirlik has been monitoring northern Iraq since 1991 to prevent Baghdad from staging attacks against the Kurds in the country's north.

Mr. Ecevit also argued Monday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein should be offered a face-saving way out of the current U.N. weapons inspections crisis.

"This region of the world is one where people commit crimes to preserve their dignity," Mr. Ecevit was quoted as saying by the newspaper Sabah.

"We would advise the U.S. authorities to offer Baghdad credible commitments on the lifting of the international embargo imposed on Iraq, so as to defuse the current crisis," Mr. Ecevit said.

NATO chief faces unwelcome Bosnia-Iraq linkage by U.S.

(Continued from page 1)

Europeans and decide to show their displeasure.

"But it's no good chopping off your left foot because you've got pain in your right foot," he added. In the end, unwelcome linkage would only prove damaging all round.

At the Munich forum, however, Arizona Republican Senator John McCain and his Virginia colleague John Warner insisted there was a direct relationship, in their own minds and those of their constituents, between the two issues. They warned that Congress would be watching how the European allies performed.

Although Chancellor Kohl has now assured the U.S. that his aircraft will be free to use their bases in Germany in the event of a strike against Iraq, only Britain among the NATO allies has pledged to fly alongside the Americans in the attack.

The French have ruled out any part in military action. President Clinton has acknowledged that air-strikes could not be expected to eradicate weapons of mass destruction which the West alleges the Iraqi president is still hiding. But the U.S. says bombing could "reduce or delay" his ability to use them.

Annan cancels Middle East tour, denies plans for trip to Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

dent Saddam Hussein for his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al Assad.

Mr. Salaf, the first Iraqi foreign minister to visit Syria in nearly two decades, travelled to the Syrian capital by road, through the border which was opened last June.

The Iraqi foreign minister is also due to visit Cairo, Amman and other Arab capitals.

He denounced U.S. threats to launch a military strike against Iraq saying "the use of force has never produced results, and those who think that they can bring about the partition of Iraq are fooling themselves and are even stupid."

He said "practical and serious" ideas were under discussion with Russia, France, Secretary-General Annan and the Arab League aimed at resolving the crisis.

Mr. Shara reaffirmed Syria's desire to see a diplomatic settlement to the crisis. "We are against any military action against Iraq and think that there is still time to resolve the problem through diplomatic efforts," he said.

"We have always supported the unity of Iraq and rejected any attack on its territorial integrity. We are working with our Arab brothers to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people," Mr. Shara said.

Britain on Monday released what it said was new information on chemical weapons which were in Iraq's arsenal at the time of the 1991 Gulf war.

Defence Secretary George Robertson told parliament Iraq may have possessed large quantities of a chemical warfare agent known as Agent 15, but there was no evidence the weapon was used.

"We have recently received intelligence indicating that, at the time of the Gulf war, Iraq may have possessed large quantities of a chemical warfare agent known as Agent 15," Mr. Robertson said.

"The immediate effects of exposure to Agent 15 would be likely to include: weakness, dizziness, disorientation and loss of co-ordination, amongst other symptoms," he added.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul-Meguid, meanwhile, announced that the Iraqi president was offering to allow U.N. weapons inspectors into 68 disputed sites over a two-month period.

He said that Iraq had also asked that Mr. Annan designate a special commission to conduct searches at eight so-called presidential sites.

The U.S. turned down similar offers from Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Nizar Hamdon, on Sunday.

Britain said Monday that Iraq's latest proposal was "encouraging" but unacceptable since President Hussein was still imposing conditions.

A foreign office spokesman said: "We welcome indications that the pressure we are putting is encouraging Saddam Hussein to make new proposals but he is still imposing conditions and this is not acceptable."

It was "encouraging that he is concentrating his mind," but the spokesman said President Hussein still did not meet the requirements of U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Abdul Meguid held talks with President Hussein last week on his first visit to Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait. Iraq has been largely isolated in the Arab World because of its invasion of the emirate in 1990.

"President Saddam Hussein informed me of his readiness to grant U.N. inspectors access to 68 sites — establishments and presidential palaces," the Arab League chief told a press conference in Cairo.

Based on the apparent compromise, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak plans to hold a three-way summit with Syria and Saudi Arabia aimed at containing the Iraq crisis, according to the London-based Arab newspaper Al Hayat.

President Mubarak is "coordinating his efforts with those by Russia and France in consultation with the United States," it said.

On the military front, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said on arrival in Kuwait on the second leg of a Gulf tour that the United States has now deployed enough assets in the Gulf to launch an air war.

"The force will be sufficient to do what we have set out to do, that is to reduce his capacity" to build weapons of mass destruction, he told reporters.

He told a press conference later that President Hussein alone holds the key to a diplomatic solution to the crisis over U.N. inspections of his weapons arsenals.

"He can resolve it tomorrow by simply abiding by the [U.N.] resolutions" on granting full and unconditional access for weapons inspectors, Mr. Cohen told the press conference after talks with Kuwaiti leaders.

"It's very simple on his part. He holds the key to resolving the crisis diplomatically," said the defence secretary.

Mr. Cohen warned that "patience is not eternal, it is wearing thin," but declined to set a deadline for the diplomatic efforts aimed at averting a U.S.-led military attack on Iraq.

A new U.N. Security Council resolution would be "helpful, but not necessary in our judgement," he said, insisting that previous resolutions already authorised the use of force.

"We have sufficient assets to carry out any military option that is necessary," said Mr. Cohen. U.S. President Bill Clinton would decide if more firepower was required.

In a joint statement issued earlier in Jeddah after talks between Mr. Cohen and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, the two countries called for a diplomatic solution but said it depended on the Iraqi president.

"We continue to hope that the crisis with Iraq will be resolved by diplomatic means," it said.

"But if Saddam Hussein refuses to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions, he alone will be responsible for the consequences of his actions," the statement warned.

In the face of Saudi opposition to a military strike, Mr. Cohen already said on Sunday that attacks would not be launched from Saudi soil, where around 100 of the 320 U.S. planes in the Gulf region are based.

On the plane to Kuwait, Mr. Cohen said his mission was "to enlighten a number of countries about what he [Hussein] is doing — many people are unaware about what he has been doing," in allegedly building weapons of mass destruction.

London, which has joined Washington in threatening Iraq with military force, was set to deploy eight Tomahawk bombers at a Kuwaiti air base on Monday as part of the U.S.-led buildup in the Gulf that includes two aircraft carriers.

With Kuwait's armed forces on alert and the emirate ordering gas masks in case of Iraqi retaliation, the British embassy advised the 4,000-strong British community living there to take "sensible precautions."

Britain has already sent three warships to the Gulf. The aircraft carrier HMS Invincible — which has 14 bombers and four Sea King attack helicopters — a frigate and a destroyer.

Despite its inferiority in terms of military technology, Iraq said Monday that it would thwart any U.S.-British attack.

"Our armed forces have completed their combat preparations to face up to a U.S.-British aggression on our country," Defence Minister Sultan Hashem Ahmad told the newspaper Nabd Al Shabab.

"The Iraqi army stands ready to protect our territory and our nation against its bane-filled enemies," the general said.

"Despite the technological superiority and sophisticated weaponry which the enemies possess, the Iraqis are certain they will be able to prevail because their cause is just."

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Sunday that the Iraqi president had only "weeks" left to comply with U.N. resolutions on weapons inspections or face an American-led military strike.

Senior French envoy Bertrand Dufourcq, who carried a warning to Baghdad last week from French President Jacques Chirac about the dangers of ignoring U.N. arms resolutions, reported to Mr. Chirac on Monday on his mission.

The talks between Mr. Chirac and Mr. Dufourcq "enabled them to set the guidelines of how France will pursue its efforts in view of reaching a diplomatic solution to the crisis in accordance with Security Council resolutions," Mr. Chirac's spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said.

Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine was also present at the meeting between Mr. Chirac and Mr. Dufourcq, who is secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, Ms. Colonna said.

Mr. Vedrine later met visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, and a French spokesman said they agreed on the need to find a diplomatic solution to the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Vedrine emerged from the hour-long meeting with Mr. Musa to declare: "We are not easing up on our efforts, quite the opposite. France is using every means to try to find a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis."

He emphasised that Cairo and Paris were "totally in agreement on this point."

Mr. Musa, for his part, stressed "the need to avoid a military operation and ensure that diplomatic efforts succeed" in a situation which he described as "dangerous."

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi has declined to state his government's position on a possible U.S. military strike against Iraq, as questions remained Monday over Rome's willingness to open its air bases to U.S. warplanes.

Newspapers on Monday reported Mr. Prodi's terse response to journalists' questions as to whether his government would respond favourably to any U.S. request to use the bases to launch strikes against Baghdad.

"I'm making no comment on that subject," Mr. Prodi said Sunday. He also refused to comment on the divisions within Europe over the use of military force against Iraq to end the showdown over U.N. weapons inspectors.

An informed political source on Sunday said Rome would not allow U.S. warplanes to use NATO air bases inside its territory, and was siding with Russia and France in urging a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Turkey denies fresh incursion into Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

around 5,000 troops there since the latest operation in September and October.

Mr. Utkan said there were contingency plans to prevent a refugee exodus in the worst case, but added: "There is no such indication for an influx of displaced persons at this point."

"And currently there is no move or necessity" for an incursion, Mr. Utkan added.

In the event of a refugee influx, the Turkish military would be involved in a "humanitarian aid program," but this would not be through what could be described as the creation of a buffer zone inside northern Iraq, he said.

More than 500,000 Iraqi Kurds massed near the Turkish border in fear of retaliation by Baghdad troops following a failed Kurdish rebellion in the wake of the 1991 Gulf war.

"Apparently, the memories of that refugee exodus are still in our mind," Mr. Utkan said.

"There are ways to handle some 100 displaced persons, but if the number is 500,000, you have to take other measures," he said.

Northern Iraq is currently protected by an allied-mon-

itored no-fly zone imposed after Iraq's defeat in the war.

Representatives in Ankara of two major Iraqi Kurdish factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, told AFP last week that no refugee exodus was expected in the region, even in the case of U.S. strikes against Iraq.

Mr. Utkan also denied press reports that the U.S. was deploying Patriot surface-to-air missile systems to Turkey to avert possible Iraqi missile attacks. "There is no such move," he said.

Turkey is hesitant on whether to allow the United States to use an allied air base in the country's south for possible air strikes on Iraqi targets.

A U.S.-led multinational force made extensive use of the Incirlik base for air attacks against Iraq during the Gulf war.

"Personally, I don't think there will be a need for such a [U.S.] request," Mr. Utkan said.

Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said last week that in the event of a U.S. request for Incirlik's use, the Turkish parliament would issue a decision.

EU chief tells Israel, PNA to stop stalling implementation of accords

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Santer dismissed questions about possible economic pressure on Israel by the European Union.

"I don't think that sanctions or pressure can save peace," he said.

President Arafat for his part said Israel must

dors between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We are in need of the European efforts on all levels, by all means, to push forward the peace process and to protect peace," he said.

Mr. Santer and Mr. Arafat went on to visit the still empty airfield at the southern tip of the Gaza Strip and the site for the proposed deep water port as well as other economic projects.

The EU official was scheduled to leave Israel Wednesday for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. He visited Cairo before coming to Israel and the Palestine territories.

Proud Indonesian tiger reduced to begging by economic crisis

Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Tourism sector records 2.2% growth

THE NUMBER of tourists who visited Jordan last year was about 3,675,000 of whom 1,127,000 persons were on touristic visits, according to sources at the Ministry of Tourism. The sources added that the tourism sector recorded 2.20 per cent growth over the 1996 figures with earnings reaching \$775 million in 1997.

Tourists coming from American states reached 107,676 persons while the number coming from European countries was 239,411. Another 50,125 tourists came from other countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and Africa.

Jordan Loan Guarantee Company receives 257 applications during first half of '97

THE JORDAN Loan Guarantee Company received a total of 257 applications valued at JD4.5 million during the first half of 1997 compared to 140 applications valued at JD2.8 million during the first half of 1996. The number of applications that were executed totalled 199 requests carrying a value of JD3.6 million compared to 191 requests valued at JD1.8 million during the first half of 1996.

The company received a total of 728 requests for information since it was set up in 1994 until mid-1997. The amounts granted totalled JD14.3 million but the amounts guaranteed were only JD7.8 million. The number of guaranteed and executed applications during the past three years were 522 loans for a total of JD10.2 million in granted amounts and JD5.6 million in guaranteed amounts.

About 3,500 job opportunities were created or maintained during the period (AL Ra'i).

Israel ratifies industrial zone pact with Jordan

ISRAEL RATIFIED an agreement with Jordan on Sunday to establish a free-trade industrial zone in Irbid. Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky said the agreement would open the Jordanian market, as well as the entire Middle East, to Israeli products. Mr. Sharansky said that the primary purpose of the agreement, signed on Nov. 11 at a Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Qatar, was to encourage cooperation between Israeli and Jordanian companies, thus contributing to the peace process.

The pact exploits an amendment to the free-trade agreement between the United States and Israel, approved by the U.S. Congress, that allows expanding the free-trade zone to Jordan in order to advance the peace process. Another aim of the agreement is to contribute to Jordan's economic development without granting free-trade status to the entire Jordanian economy and all its products.

1998 expected to be the year of privatisation in Jordan

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite fierce opposition from Parliament and political parties, 1998 is expected to be the year of the much-delayed privatisation of Jordan's main profitable firms, officials said Monday.

"If no escalation in tension between Iraq and the United States occurs and no negative developments take place in the peace process, the privatisation process will be concluded very soon," said an official involved in the small-scale privatisation process.

He declined to give the names and nationalities of firms that have joined a bid to become strategic partners in three money-making firms topping the privatisation list — the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC), the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCF) and the National Oil Company (NOC).

The Executive Privatisation Unit (EPU), established last year to supervise Jordan's privatisation programme launched in the early 1990s, is expected to name the three winners "in the first few months of this year," he told the Jordan Times. Four foreign firms, two of them American, one British and one Greek, have bid to buy 40 per cent of the JTC equity, official sources said.

"The government has sent memos with all information to several foreign firms and many have responded and I believe that the process will be concluded by late April," said one source.

Representatives from these firms have visited Jordan and verified the status of the JTC, he added. He declined to name the firms and said that three more firms were expected to join the race soon.

The source added that the EPU had sent 21 invitations to international companies to join a bid to work as financial advisors to help JCF get rid of 33 per cent of government shares and choose a strategic partner.

The EPU, which has set Feb. 28 as a deadline for

the replies, is expected to take its decision in March, said the source.

Other sources said the government had also appointed a financial advisor to help privatise the NOC — a profit-making company with proven gas reserve and untapped potential.

"Offers to buy the NOC shares should be submitted by Feb. 19 and by the end of March the decision would be taken," the source said.

The terms of reference to establish an Independent Power Producer (IPP), to generate between 300 to 350 million megawatts, with a capital of \$400m were also distributed to foreign firms to build and run the plant.

The government is also looking for foreign investors to finance and run the Dist project to transfer water from southern Jordan to several parts of the Kingdom at an expected cost of JD500 million.

"The mere offering of the country's profitable firms means that the government

is serious and aggressive in its endeavour," said one source.

Delay in choosing the strategic partners for some public sector firms was mainly because "the framework and principles of privatisation were not ready."

"Several foreign firms have submitted requests to buy equities in the public sector firms," he said. Applications were studied thoroughly and we are in the process of eliminating some of these firms from the short list."

He said that Higher Committee for Privatisation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, will choose the bidders.

But the government's privatisation endeavours are facing stiff objection from opposition parties and Parliament.

On Sunday, 48 Lower House deputies submitted a request to House speaker Sa'd Hayat Sour to stop government procedures to privatise the "profit-making firms."

And many of the opposition parties have repeated-

ly said that the government had succumbed to pressures from international financial institutions to get rid of its shares in state-owned firms under an IMF-agreed economic reform programme launched in 1989.

But the vocal pro-privatisation lobby in the country believes that the process will improve the efficiency and productivity of the public sector firm as well as introducing the modern know-how technology to the Kingdom.

Last year the government decided to establish a trust fund to keep net revenue coming from the sale of its shares under the privatisation plan.

The fund's deposits will no longer be considered part of the general budget to be used by the government.

Other loss-making firms likely to undergo gradual privatisation include Royal Jordanian, Aquila Railroad, Irbid's Electricity Company, the Public Transportation Company, a glass factory and a company for television production.

Obeidat wants coffee, rice and sugar prices lowered

By Issam Qadamani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Muhammad Obeidat, the president of the National Consumer Protection Society (NCPS) Monday complained that agreements reached with coffee mer-

chants and the Ministry of Supply in 1995 concerning prices have not been respected.

While the coffee prices

on world markets declined, coffee prices in Jordan remained unchanged, said Dr. Obeidat.

Recalling that the public campaign for boycotting the coffee in 1995 achieved some success in that it caused the prices to drop a little, Dr. Obeidat said that the boycott campaign lasted for three months only but later the merchants again raised the prices, totally disregarding the agreements which were backed by the Ministry of Supply at the time.

He said that under the agreements, the merchants and the Ministry of Supply together with the NCPS were to hold regular meetings every six months in order to review the prices situation, but these agreements also were ignored.

Dr. Obeidat said that the present coffee prices in Jordan do not reflect the actual prices on the world markets suggesting that the merchants should bring down the price of the best (Robusta) brand of coffee to a maximum of JD3.5 per kilogramme and the (Extra) to JD4.

Dr. Obeidat also demanded that the price of sugar and rice should also be lowered in view of the decline in prices on world markets.

Merchants selling a kilogramme of sugar for 270 fils down from the present 340 fils can guarantee up to 25 per cent profit, the NCPS chief stressed.

To find a drastic and final solution to the merchants' tampering with prices, Dr. Obeidat urged the government to speed up the enactment of a law banning monopoly and encouraging competition saying that such move would stem further manipulation of prices.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8164	0.6117	1.4640	124.28	1.4354	1794.00	2.0475	6.9090
DE Mark	0.5508	-	0.3358	0.8058	90.45	0.7905	987.02	1.1269	3.3515
GB Sterling	1.6348	2.9675	-	2.3918	203.11	2.3466	2920.80	3.3435	9.3450
CH Franc	0.6831	1.2332	0.4175	-	84.87	0.8758	1234.57	139.74	4.1543
JP Yen	0.0080	1.4596	0.4918	1.1776	-	1.1540	14.42	164.55	4.8931
CA Dollar	0.5967	1.2479	0.4195	1.0112	1.15	-	1231.91	1.4069	4.1631
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0120	0.3410	0.8816	1444.57	0.8002	-	11.41	3.3928
NL Guilder	0.4894	88.70	0.2988	71.53	60.69	0.7012	875.98	-	2.9728
FR Franc	0.1642	0.2982	0.1005	24.0513	20.40	0.2358	33.62	33.5200	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7565	0.3770	3.6408	0.3064	3.6729	1525.00	3.3965
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2858	0.6317	5.1351	0.4307	5.1804	2156.58	4.7805
Saudi Riyal	0.2665	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.58	0.9066
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9455	-	9.65	0.8101	9.74	4055.81	8.0094
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0839	1.01	419.96	0.9329
Kuwait Dinar	3.2744	2.3215	12.2806	1.2344	11.92	-	12.03	5006.55	9.9229
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0211	0.0913	0.0831	-	418.29	0.9247
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4637	2.4525	0.2466	2.3812	0.1997	2.4022	-	2.2214
Egyptian	0.2944	0.2087	1.1042	0.1110	0.0899	1.0814	450.17	-	-

Energy				
Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last
Brent	14.84	15.15	WTI	14.84
Brent	16.82	16.59	WTI	16.82
Brent	14.84	15.15	WTI	14.84
Dubai	12.70	12.73	WTI	12.70
UL Gas	159.00	159.00	WTI	159.00

Metal Prices			
Metal	Bid	Offer	Metal
Gold (oz's)	301.1	301.6	Gold (oz's)
Silver (oz's)	7.12	7.19	Silver (oz's)
Platinum (oz's)	392	394	Platinum (oz's)
Al (3 Months)	1508	1510	Al (3 Months)
CU (3 Months)	1690	1694	CU (3 Months)
Zinc (3 Months)	1089	1092	Zinc (3 Months)
Lead (3 Months)	531	532	Lead (3 Months)
Ni (3 Months)	5580	5595	Ni (3 Months)

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
UNOFFICIAL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 09/02/1998									
NO.	NAME	PRICE	NO.	NAME	PRICE	NO.	NAME	PRICE	NO.
1	AMMAN BANK	15.1	11	AMMAN BANK	15.1	21	AMMAN BANK	15.1	31
2	AMMAN BANK	15.1	12	AMMAN BANK	15.1	22	AMMAN BANK	15.1	32
3	AMMAN BANK	15.1	13	AMMAN BANK	15.1	23	AMMAN BANK	15.1	33
4	AMMAN BANK	15.1	14	AMMAN BANK	15.1	24	AMMAN BANK	15.1	34
5	AMMAN BANK	15.1	15	AMMAN BANK	15.1	25	AMMAN BANK	15.1	35
6	AMMAN BANK	15.1	16	AMMAN BANK	15.1	26	AMMAN BANK	15.1	36
7	AMMAN BANK	15.1	17	AMMAN BANK	15.1	27	AMMAN BANK	15.1	37
8	AMMAN BANK	15.1	18	AMMAN BANK	15.1	28	AMMAN BANK	15.1	38
9	AMMAN BANK	15.1	19	AMMAN BANK	15.1	29	AMMAN BANK	15.1	39
10	AMMAN BANK	15.1	20	AMMAN BANK	15.1	30	AMMAN BANK	15.1	40

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The pain of the glory for Olympic skaters

NAGANO (AFP) — Figure skating is the most watched of the Winter Olympic sports and the most punishing on the body of the contenders.

Bone-jarring leaps on the ice, a clash of blades in training, freak accidents and illness have all taken their toll on the Winter Olympics.

World pairs champion Ingo Steuer cannot lift partner Mandy Woetzel without feeling a searing pain in his shoulder after he was hit by a car in December.

The 31-year-old German will probably need a new painkilling injection before Tuesday's final in the Nagano White Ring.

Elena Berezhnaya, favourite to win the Olympic pairs title with Anton Sikharulidze, still carries the physical and mental scars of a training accident two years ago when her former partner's blade cut into her left temple leaving her partially paralysed.

Their coach Tamarina Moskvina said skating was an art "and sometimes you have to suffer."

Berezhnaya needed surgery to remove bone from close to her brain and Moskvina admitted she had feared for her protégée.

The 20-year-old said she had been afraid for a couple of days. "But I have taken care of that now. That is in the past," she added.

Continual colds from training in freezing temperatures and the hazardous ice injuries are as big a threat to skaters as the stress of performing before judges and the biggest television audience of the Winter Olympics.

Jenni Meno, who partners Todd Sand, has been suffering with an ankle injury for months. But she said: "Everyone up here has got something wrong with them. You just have to put up with it."

Ice injuries will also play a major role in the women's title. U.S. champion Michelle Kwan knows to her cost.

She undertook a punishing training schedule after losing her national and world titles to American rival Tara Lipinski, and a stress fracture in her left foot became so bad she could not walk.

"I torture myself and put myself through all kinds of tasks," the 17-year-old Kwan said after winning the U.S. championship back from Lipinski last month.

Kwan has delayed her arrival in Nagano, partly so she can give herself more time to rest the foot.

Last season was also the toughest for 20-year-old Tanja Szewczenko of Germany, whose promising career was nearly cut short by a life-threatening illness.

As a 15-year-old Szewczenko came fourth in the European championships and was proclaimed a future world champion. But at the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics she collided with Oksana Baiul in practice causing what turned out to be the first in a string of injuries that dragged her performances down.

Szewczenko was confined to bed for much of last year two, different blood viruses. But now she is back skating at her best, having won two Champions series events and coming a close second to Lipinski in the series final in Munich in December.

"I'm fully fit and as strong now as when I was preparing for Lillehammer, maybe even stronger," she said. "No-one will know how good that feels."



Bruno Reuteler of Switzerland soars above the Olympic rings during the second day of training for the K90 ski jump event. The training was interrupted several times due to high winds. The K90 jumping competition is scheduled to take place on February 11 (Reuters photo)



USA's Casey FitzRandolph tucks in tight as he competes in the first race of the Olympic speed skating men's 500 metres at the M-Wave stadium. FitzRandolph finished in second place with a time of 35.81 seconds. The final of the event will be held on February 10 with Japan's Hiroyasu Shimizu leading the competition after the first race (Reuters photo)



Bulgaria's Ekaterina Dafovska kisses her Olympic gold medal at the medal ceremony in Nagano. Dafovska became the first Bulgarian to win a Winter Olympic Gold medal when she won the women's 15km Biathlon earlier in the day (Reuters photo)

Nagano Winter Olympics German wins men's luge, Bulgarian victorious in biathlon

NAGANO (AP) — Germany's Georg Hackl steered his sled into the history books Monday, winning his third straight Olympic luge gold on a day when heavy snowfall again caused havoc with the Games' schedule.

The biggest casualty of the weather was Bjorn Daele, choosing the wrong wax for the fresh snow and seeing his search for Olympic glory go astray in a winter storm during the 30-kilometre cross-country race.

The Norwegian star finished 20th in a race won by Finland's Mika Myllylä. Keeping her gun on target through a veil of flakes, Yekaterina Dafovska won the 15-kilometre biathlon, the first winter gold medal for Bulgaria.

Hackl, 31, won with consummate ease, finishing fastest in all four runs over two days in the ice chute. Silver medalist Armin Ziegler of Italy finished a half-second slower, and Germany's Jens Mueller earned bronze.

Hackl's victories in the 1992 Albertville and 1994 Lillehammer Games were epic battles with Markus Prock, but this time the Austrian faded outside the medals into fourth place.

With his win, Hackl became the sixth member of an elite group of Winter Games athletes who have won gold at three games in a row, including figure skaters Sonia Henie of Norway and Irina Rodnina of the Soviet Union and speedskater Bonnie Blair of the United States.

Hackl is hardly as dominating during regular World Cup competition, but he's unbeatable at the Olympics. "I'm preparing years and years for one big event," he said.



Germany's Georg Hackl listens to his country's national anthem after receiving the gold medal for his victorious men's luge race. Hackl made luge history when he became the first man to win the men's singles title at three consecutive Games (Reuters photo)

His three straight gold medal prove it.

In the medal standings, Germany took an early lead with three medals, including one gold and two bronze. Italy also has three — two silvers and a bronze. Host Japan has yet to earn a medal but speedskater Hiroyasu Shimizu is in prime position to clinch the first one Tuesday after setting an Olympic record in the first of two 500s.

Dutch favourite Jan Bos stumbled out of contention. Norway's Daele had been favoured to clinch an unprecedented sixth winter games' gold medal, but it was the Finn's day.

Another Norwegian, Erling Jeune, took the silver and Italy's Silvio Fauser won the bronze.

"Life goes on," said Daele, who is entered in

four more Olympic races to seek gold.

At higher elevations, the Olympics could not get going, snowfall forced the postponement of the women's snowboard giant slalom finals and the men's combined slalom for at least a day.

The snow that wiped out the men's downhill on Sunday continued through the night and into the morning, dropping more than 30 centimetres of snow on the Happo-one course.

Daele's slump was the second cross-country disappointment in as many days for Norway, the dominant force in Lillehammer four years ago. Norwegians finished 1-2 in the 30k race in Lillehammer. Norwegian women had hoped to sweep Sunday's 15k race but only ended up with a bronze.

Apart from Daele, the World's No. 1 cross-country racer, Thomas Algaard, also disappointed. Norwegian hopes, failing to finish the race.

The biathlon victory by

Bulgaria's Dafovska was a big surprise.

She refused to be unsettled by the snow and gusting winds and humbled the world's best to capture the skiing and shooting event.

"I had dreamed about hearing the Bulgarian anthem at the Olympics one day. I didn't realise it would come so soon," said Dafovska. The silver went to another middle-ranked biathlete, Elena Petrova of the Ukraine, while 1994 Olympic bronze medalist, Ursula Dist of Germany, repeated her third place.

Russian pair skaters Artur Dmitriev and Oksana Kazakova will go into Tuesday night's free program with a lead from the short program. They were one of only five couples among 20 to hit side-by-side triple jumps on a sloppy opening night Sunday.

World champions Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer of Germany stood second and favourites Yelena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze of Russia were third.

Australian open champions head for Dubai

WHILE MANY tennis fans spent thousands of dollars flying to Australia to watch the best players in the world perform at the Australian Open, Dubai fans can simply go to the Dubai Tennis Stadium starting Feb. 9 and the players will come to them.

"We are proud to be acting as hosts to many of the players who made headlines at the first Grand Slam of the year," said Colm McLoughlin, Managing Director, Dubai Duty Free.

Both old friend Petr Korda, who has participated in the Dubai Tennis Open three times, and new face Marcelo Rios will be taking part in the ATP Tour World Series tournament after facing each other off in the final of the Australian Open.

Korda's ultimate and easy win in Melbourne has rocketed the 30 year old up the rankings from a respectable 13 at the end of 1997 to an elevated position as No. 2 in the world.

It is not only in singles that Dubai-bound stars have been lifting the winner's cup. No. 1 Swede Jonas Bjorkman claimed the Australian Open doubles crown with partner Jacco Eltingh, scoring a great victory over the famous

Woodies, Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde.

Among the large contingent of Spaniards returning to Dubai this year, will be the diminutive Alberto Berasategui, who could have been labelled a party spoiler by the Australian crowd after he banished U.S. Open champion and local favourite Patrick Rostier and Andre Agassi before him.

It was there that Berasategui finally ran out of steam and was beaten by another in-form Dubai bound player — Marcelo Rios.

Hicham Arazi, born in Morocco and raised in France, stunned big-serving Mark Philippoussis on his way to a fourth showdown with Pete Sampras. Although losing to the World No. 1 in three tight sets, Arazi held set points and drew considerable praise from Sampras who compared him to Michael Chang.

Nicolas Kiefer, Germany's new tennis hope, also demonstrated that he is a star of the future by reaching the quarter-finals of the Australian Open this year before succumbing to Frenchman Nicolas Escude.

Invitation for Pre-Qualification of Contractors For the Construction of Integrated Development Project for the Southern Ghors

(Extension of Time)
Reference is made to the Announcement in local newspaper on 2nd February, 1998 regarding the invitation for Pre-Qualification of Contractors for the Construction of Integrated Development Project for the Southern Ghors. The time for the purchase of the pre-qualification documents has been extended to February 17th, 1998 instead of February 10th, 1998. Accordingly item No. 5 of the above referenced Announcement shall read as follows:
"5. The deadline set for the purchase of pre-qualification documents shall be on February, 17th, 1998."

Jordan Valley Authority
Secretary General
Dr. Dureid Mahasneh

Address
Special Committee for
The Mujib and Southern Ghors Project Address:
P.O. Box 2769 — Amman-Jordan
Fax: 962-6-5689-616
Tel: 962-6-5689-470
Tel: 962-6-5689-464

JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES CO., LTD.

Announces the invitation to Tender No. 7F/98

JPMC announces the invitation to bid No. 7F/98 for the supply of:

{ { lubricating oils and greases } }

The tender documents are available at JPMC offices in Amman Supply Department until 2:00 p.m. local time Saturday 28th February, 1998. Application for documents should be accompanied by a non-refundable fee of JD50 for each set of tender documents. The closing date for submitting bids is 12:00 hours local time Tuesday 10th March, 1998.

SAMEH MADANI
MANAGING DIRECTOR

URGANCY

The American Embassy in Amman has a vacancy for a senior Economic/Commercial Specialist to act as principal advisor on economic and commercial matters, gather and analyze macroeconomic data from public and private sectors, and draft reports. (Requirements: B.A./B.S. degree in Economics, Marketing, or Business Administration; three years in a position requiring economic analysis, fluency in spoken and written Arabic and English; ability to draft concise analytical reports; and good representational skills).

Only qualified applicants should submit an application form (available at the Embassy gate) to the Personnel Office prior to February 22, 1998.

KREDITANSTALT FÜR WIEDERAUFBAU (KfW) is a bank

owned by the Federal Republic of Germany and the federal states (Länder) for our regional office which we will open in

Amman in April 1998 we are looking for a

highly qualified secretary

with very good knowledge of the English and Arabic languages knowledge of the German language is not a requirement but would be welcome. The candidate should be reliable, self-confident and be able to work with standard office software currently in use.

Applications should indicate a phone-number under which the candidate may be contacted as well as indicate his/her salary request and should be sent soonest to

KfW
c/o GTZ attn. Mr. Kehr
P.O. Box 926 238
Amman

Immediate Banking Career Opportunities Available

A Global Banking Organization is seeking to employ Jordanians to fill the position of a Relationship Manager.

The applicant should have:

- An MBA degree or MA in Economics, Accounting or Finance from a strong US or UK University.
- 3-5 years experience in banking
- Excellent Computer skills are a must.
- Fluency in English, with excellent writing ability.
- Strong ability to be a team player.
- Strong ability to meet deadlines.

Applications, along with a current Curriculum Vitae, and a passport size photo should be mailed to the following address before February 15, 1998:

Career Opportunity
PO Box 5055
Amman 11183, Jordan

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY Annual notice to all Australian citizens living in Jordan

Have you registered with the Australian Embassy?

If you are an Australian citizen residing in Jordan, please contact the Australian Embassy in Amman to register.

If you registered in 1997, please confirm your presence in Jordan by re-registering as soon as possible. Also, notify the Embassy about any changes in address and/or contact number.

If names are not re-registered within 2 months, the Embassy will consider those persons have left Jordan and their names will be deleted from the Embassy register.

The Australian Embassy is located in Jabal Amman, between 4th & 5th Circles next to the Ministry of Social Development.

P.O. Box: 35201 Amman 11180
Business Hours: 07:30 - 14:30
Sunday to Thursday
Tel: 5930246-7 / Fax: 5931260

U.S. blocks Russian deputies' humanitarian flight to Baghdad

Combined agency dispatches

THE UNITED STATES has blocked authorisation in the U.N. Sanctions Committee for a flight to Baghdad by 100 Russian deputies and journalists, Western diplomats said Monday.

A Western diplomat on the 15-nation Sanctions Committee said that Washington "put a hold on the flight" on Friday on grounds that it was not of an urgent humanitarian nature.

The U.S. said that there would be no objection if the delegation travelled to Baghdad by land, however.

Iran has meanwhile refused

overflight permission to the aircraft, which was held up in the Armenian capital on Monday with Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and over 100 deputies and journalists on board, according to diplomats here.

Russian diplomats here argued that Russia only needed to notify the U.N. Sanctions Committee of the flight, and that permission was not required under "no objection" procedures which enable delegations to block decisions.

However, the U.N. legal office decided that traditional practice was for the Sanctions Committee authorisation to be sought.

"Bilateral contacts are underway to resolve the issue," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said Monday at a news conference. He noted that Mr. Zhirinovskiy's flight had originally been expected in Baghdad on Tuesday.

The Russian-built Ilyushin 86, carrying up to 15 tonnes of humanitarian aid according to Russian sources, spent Sunday on the tarmac at Moscow airport after failing to secure U.N. authorisation to fly into Baghdad.

The aircraft, carrying 57 deputies from the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, and 73 journalists, eventually took off late Sunday

for Yerevan.

Neighbouring Azerbaijan and Iran have refused to grant the aircraft permission to overfly their territory unless U.N. approval is secured in advance.

The Russian deputies were planning to meet the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan later Monday in a bid to gain clearance from Tehran for the flight to Baghdad.

"Iran is ready to cooperate with the sending of the Russian aid to the Iraqi population within the framework of the U.N. decisions," said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi in Tehran, the IRNA news agency reported.

Israel calls Palestinian pro-Iraqi demonstrations 'great mistake'

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated Monday in favour of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, calling on him to fire chemical weapons on Israel and chanting "Death to America."

Israeli leaders warned the Palestinians they were making a "great mistake" in showing support for a sworn enemy of the Jewish state and said pro-Saddam demonstrations could further jeopardise Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Some 500 protesters in the West Bank city of Ramallah burned dozens of Israeli and U.S. flags as many shouted "Hit Israel with chemical weapons, Saddam" and "Our blood, our soul is sacrificed for Saddam."

After the demonstration, about 100 youths sneaked around a Palestinian police blockade to an Israeli checkpoint where they threw stones at soldiers and burned tires.

In the West Bank city of Jenin, around 1,000 demonstrators chanted "Death to America, Death to [U.S. President Bill] Clinton, Death to [British Prime Minister Tony] Blair."

Protesters called on the United States to refrain from carrying out threatened air

strikes against Iraq in the showdown over U.N. weapons inspections.

Another pro-Iraq demonstration was planned later Monday in Gaza Strip. The rallies were organised by various organisations, including the Fateh faction of the PLO.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) however played no open role in the demonstrations.

The U.S. backed by Britain, has threatened punishing air strikes against Iraq unless President Hussein stops barring U.N. inspectors from sites suspected of hiding long-range missiles and chemical and biological arms.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out Monday at the Palestinian shows of support for Iraq, a fierce opponent of the Jewish state.

"The Palestinians have to decide whether they want to live in peace with Israel or support Saddam," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said the Palestinian protests brought back "bad memories" of the 1991 Gulf war when Palestinian rejoiced at Iraqi missile attacks on Tel Aviv which killed two people and injured hundreds.

Israeli Defence Minister

Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday that the Palestinians were making a "great mistake" in supporting Iraq at a time when most Arab states have joined in pressuring the Iraqi president to obey U.N. demands.

Ramallah demonstrators said they hoped President would retaliate against Israel in the event of a U.S. strike because the Jewish state has not honoured its peace agreements with the Palestinians.

"To hell with the peace process," said Muhammad, 16, who refused to give his last name. "Where is it? It doesn't exist anymore."

Protesters accused the U.S. of hypocrisy in insisting Iraq fully respect U.N. disarmament resolutions while not demanding that Israel honour its agreements.

Israeli officials quoted in the Israeli press Monday said the PNA was behind the demonstrations although Palestinian officials said publicly only that they hoped for a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis.

"I hope this tension with Iraq will end very soon and we will find a diplomatic solution and not a military one," PNA General-Secretary Ahmad Abdul Rahman said Monday.

Assad removes brother as vice president

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Assad has stripped his youngest brother, Rifaat Assad, of his post as one of the country's three vice presidents, Syrian officials said Monday.

President Assad issued a decree on Sunday removing Rifaat Assad from the post, the officials said. No explanation was given for the move.

Rifaat Assad, 60, is the youngest brother of the Syrian leader and was named commander in 1974 of an elite unit of the Syrian army.

He was named a vice president responsible for military and national security affairs on March 11, 1984.

The other two vice presidents are Abdul Halim Khaddam (political and foreign affairs) and Zuhair Masharqa (internal and party affairs).

Rifaat Assad left Syria in 1984 and spent time in Paris, Geneva and Madrid before returning to the country in 1992 following the death of his mother, Nafisa.

Clinton lawyers take sex scandal prosecutor to court over leaks

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Lawyers for U.S. President Bill Clinton on Monday sought to stanch the flow of sordid details spilling out of the White House intern sex scandal by taking the prosecutor to court over the leaks.

"It's now not so much a political issue as it has become a legal issue," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said as Mr. Clinton's lawyer prepared to file his complaint to court.

Attorney David Kendall was expected to file a complaint against independent investigator Kenneth Starr in a federal court here Monday.

Though the complaint will be sealed, Mr. Lockhart said it was likely to include a call for an investigation and possible sanctions on Mr. Starr.

Mr. Starr, a Republican who also is investigating Whitewater and other White House affairs, is leading the investigation into allegations the president had an affair with Monica Lewinsky and sought to cover it up.

Mr. Clinton has denied the affair but has refused to comment on the nature of his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, who began working as an intern at the White House in 1995 at age 21.

Mr. Starr is also under attack from Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, who vowed to take Mr. Starr to court to enforce an immunity agreement for his client.

Writing in Time magazine, Mr. Ginsburg said Mr. Starr reneged on a deal to give Ms. Lewinsky immunity from perjury charges if she testified on her alleged sexual relationship with Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Ginsburg said Mr. Starr's office sent him a letter of agreement on the immunity deal Feb. 2, then pulled the offer two days later.

"So this week we plan to file a motion in court to enforce the agreement. This was a binding agreement that they sent us in writing," he wrote.



AN INDONESIAN QUESTION OF MONEY: Riot police guard a protester flashing rupiah notes outside Jakarta's Central Bank building Monday. Some 300 demonstrators, mostly supporters of popular opposition figure Megawati Sukarnoputri held a demonstration at the heavily guarded Jakarta's Central Bank headquarters protesting at the instability of the rupiah currency and demanding Indonesian President Suharto to step down (AFP photo)

European mission stonewalled; Algiers demands anti-terror help

ALGIERS (AP) — European lawmakers met with more of their Algerian counterparts Monday after getting a cool reception when asking about disappearances during a 6-year-old Islamist insurgency.

The Algerian lawmakers instead asked help to battle the rebels by cutting off sources of foreign cash and arms used in their drive to bring down the military-backed government of this petroleum-rich nation.

The nine-member fact-finding mission from the European Parliament, which arrived Sunday on a five-day visit, was to gather information on the insurgency in the wake of massacres last month that left hundreds dead. Some reports have linked troops to the slayings.

During a meeting Sunday night with Algerian lawmakers, a Belgian member of the mission, Anne-Andree Leonard, asked about missing Algerians in the conflict.

But Abdelkader Hadjar, head of the foreign affairs commission of the National Popular Assembly dominated by pro-government parties, refused to accept a list of the missing

from Ms. Leonard.

Instead, Mr. Hadjar suggested the list be sent "by official diplomatic means" to Algerian human rights organisations, one of which is official.

So far, Algerian authorities had yet to approve requests by the delegation to tour violence-prone areas. On Sunday, the authorities rejected a trip to massacre sites.

Mr. Hadjar instead asked that "the embargo on anti-terrorist technology be lifted," referring to arms the West has avoided selling to the Algerians.

He also asked an investigation "on the networks of support and finance of terrorism" in Europe. He called the talks with the lawmakers "a step toward concrete results."

The fact-finding mission came a month after an inconclusive visit by European Union governments. The envoys this week planned to meet with a cross-section of politicians, human rights and feminist groups, as well as relatives of massacre victims.

The delegation includes Germany's Green Party member Daniel Cohn-Bendit, known for suggesting foreign intervention to protect Algerian civilians. Other countries include Austria, France, Spain and Greece.

Algeria's government has firmly rejected any attempt by foreign governments to interfere. Algeria has long been sensitive to foreign influence, especially to that of Paris, after wresting itself from France in 1962.

Critics of the Algerian government, however, call the stand a smokescreen to avoid a probe that could link the army to at least a passive role in the killings.

On the eve of the latest European foray, Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia reiterated his "rejection of any foreign interference."

According to Algiers, 26,536 people have been killed and 21,000 injured since an Islamist insurgency began six years ago. Press and hospital sources put the figure at 75,000 since 1992 elections which the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front was seen to win.

Cyprus gears up for presidential runoff

NICOSIA (R) — Incumbent conservative President Glafcos Clerides will face independent challenger George Iakovou as Cyprus gears up for a repeat presidential election on Feb. 15 after an inconclusive first round on Sunday.

Former Foreign Minister Iakovou edged ahead with 40.6 per cent of the vote from 447,000 registered voters, just half a percentage point ahead of Mr. Clerides' showing of 40.1 per cent.

Both candidates said they would seek cooperation from some or all of the other five presidential candidates left trailing behind in Sunday's closely fought election.

Seven hopefuls had wooed the electorate with promises of doing a better job to resolve the decades-old logjam of Cyprus's division and steer the island closer towards European Union membership.

Cyprus, divided after a Turkish invasion in 1974 following a brief Greek-inspired coup, is due to start entry talks with the 15-member bloc in April.

The election is seen as crucial to the fate of a U.N.-led initiative to resume long-stalled talks between estranged Greek and Turkish Cypriots in reuniting their island.

Mr. Clerides and Mr. Iakovou stopped short of claiming victory.

"From tomorrow [Monday] I start efforts to form a national unity government," an unusually glum Clerides, 78, told reporters.

Socialist leader Vassos Lyssarides, who garnered an unexpected high 10.6 per cent with his own presidential bid, is emerging as the obvious target for both candidates.

Aware that he can swing the election either way, Mr. Lyssarides has been tight-lipped on who his party will support in the political haggling expected in the countdown to the runoff.

But he made a point of stressing in his slick campaign that any cooperation will be on his terms, which are not negotiable.

The mass-selling daily Philoephepheros reported his party was due to meet later Monday to assess the outcome of the polls.

A bland technocrat and former foreign minister, Mr. Iakovou, 59, has accused Mr. Clerides administration of inconsistent policies that have rendered a solution to the Cyprus conflict more elusive than ever.

Backed by the ideologically distant communist party Akei and the centre-right Democratic Party, Mr. Iakovou was running on a platform of bringing fresh ideas to solve the Cyprus issue.

But political analysts said his bid failed to muster the combined strength of the two parties — which based on some preliminary estimates should have been in excess of 44 per cent.

Independent candidate Alexis Galanos, the Democratic Party rebel who failed to toe the party line and back Mr. Iakovou, got 4.0 per cent of the vote, poached from equally disgruntled party supporters.

With the backing of the Democratic Party, seen as hardline on the Cyprus issue, foreign analysts say Mr. Iakovou could be less amenable to compromise.

Lawyer sues

Clinton for damages to children's morals

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian lawyer is seeking one billion dollars in damages from President Bill Clinton, claiming the latter's "sexual antics" could harm his children's morals. "I don't know what to tell my children when they keep asking me to explain Clinton's sex scandals published in the press," said Mustafa Raslan. "That's why I've taken legal action and am demanding damages and interest to the tune of a billion dollars from the White House chief," he told AFP.

Australian

camel racing saga of beauty and beast

SYDNEY (R) — Camels are not pretty, and racing them is hardly glamorous, but a group of Australian women are hoping to change all that. The young women, with the help of the United Arab Emirates' best camel handlers, plan to improve the image of the obnoxious camel — an animal that spits and kicks and has a body odour problem. The Australian Camel Racing Association has advertised for "attractive" female jockeys aged 18 to 25 with the aim, Association President Kevin Handley says, to destroy the image of Australian camel racers as "bearded, backward boozers" and that of the camel as an "untrustworthy, stinking and arrogant" animal.

Van Damme

gets slammed in topless bar

NEW YORK (AFP) — Belgian kick-boxing movie hero Jean-Claude Van Damme got a knock-out punch from a former bodyguard in a popular topless nightclub here, the New York Post reported. Van Damme — dubbed "The Muscles from Brussels" — was at the Scores nightclub with a group of friends including actor Mickey Rourke late Thursday when he got into an argument with former employee Chuck Zito, Zito, who now works in the movie and television business, concluded the argument with a single punch that put Van Damme on the carpet. Van Damme managed to leave the nightclub on his own steam, signing autographs on the way out.

Barbie discovers the delights of girl power

LONDON (R) — Barbie has discovered the delights of girl power and is off clubbing with heads in her hair. She has a new look for the nineties and is off to work as dentist. "It is ultimate girl power," said Cheryl Sloan, products manager at Mattel Inc who have given Barbie her first new makeover since 1977. American girls now own an average of 10 Barbies each. "She is a career girl who is beautiful, has lots of friends and can do everything," Sloan said. The marketing echoed the appeal of the Spice Girls, who model themselves on former Premier Margaret Thatcher and preach "girl power" as their credo.

Day-Lewis has future as a boxer

LONDON (AFP) — Daniel Day-Lewis pulled no punches preparing for his latest role in "The Boxer," in which he plays an IRA prisoner who turns to boxing on his release from prison. He trained so hard to capture the harsh reality of life in the ring that his tutor, former world boxing champion Barry McGuigan, reckons he's easily among Britain's top 20 middleweights. "The Boxer," which also stars Emily Watson — who won acclaim last year in "Breaking The Waves" — opens the Berlinale film festival on Wednesday.

Results of the

Jordan times

Car Competition for 1997

Winner of the Grand Prize: Suzuki Baleno Car:

Evelyn Maddock — Ain Al Basha

Other Winners

1. Cindy Mansur — Amman (Free ticket Amman-Athens-Amman provided by Royal Jordanian).
2. Seumi Nomura Arafat — Amman (20" Television set).
3. Awad S.H. Hussein — Irbid (Video set)
4. Tawfiq Ahmad Al Shwabkeh — Madaba (Stereo set).
5. Nazrul-Mozibur Rahman — Amman (Vacuum cleaner).
6. Yazid Qusous — Amman (One year subscription to the Jordan Times).
7. Laith E. Haddad — Amman (Seven-month subscription to the Jordan Times).
8. Mahmoud Ziad Mahimoud — Madaba, Al Arish (Three-month subscription to the Jordan Times).

Winners are kindly requested to call at the Public Relations Office at the Jordan Press Foundation on Saturday, Feb. 14, during office hours to receive their prizes.